NATION

Manipur tense again as 2 Assam Rifles jawans killed

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BUSINESS

Return to US now: Firms to H1B visa workers

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SPORTS

India aims for another dominant show against Pak

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Trump's H1Bomb: $100K fee stuns IT world

This move will impact thousand of Indian workers in the US

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

In a move likely to affect thousands of Indian professionals, US President Donald Trump has signed a proclamation imposing a steep annual fee of USD 1,00,000 on new H1B visa applications. The change, set to take effect from 21 September 2025, has triggered sharp criticism from lawmakers and community leaders, who have called it "reckless" and "unfortunate."

Titled 'Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers', the proclamation argues that the H1B programme is being misused to replace American workers with cheaper, lower-skilled foreign labour. It also labels such practices a national security threat.

Currently, H1B visa fees range between USD 2,000 and USD 5,000, depending on employer size and processing costs. The H1B visa allows skilled foreign workers, mostly in tech, to live and work in the US for three years, extendable by another three. Indian nationals constitute the majority of H1B holders.

President Trump unveils the Gold Card at the White House in Washington, offering fast-track Green Cards for $1 to 2 million **PHOTO: PTI**

Trump defended the drastic fee hike, saying the H1B visas are being abused and it is a threat to national security. "Is that person valuable enough to have a $1,00,000 a year payment to the government, or should they head home and hire an American?" added Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi criticised the move, saying it risks cutting off access to high-skilled global talent that drives American innovation and job creation.

The new fee applies only to new applicants currently outside the US. Existing H1B visa holders within the US are exempt for now, though renewals could be affected if employers opt out of paying the new fee.

The rule will remain in force for 12 months. Additional restrictions on B visa holders connected to H1B employment will be introduced before 1 October 2026. Limited exemptions may be granted if hiring is deemed in the national interest and not a threat to US welfare or security.

The proclamation also announced a new visa category, The Gold Card, offering expedited Green Card access to individuals investing USD 1 million personally, or USD 2 million through a sponsoring company.

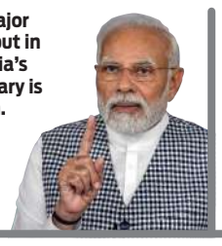
Indian techies are among the main beneficiaries of the US H-1B visa program, which attracts top talent and expertise from around the globe. The Congressional mandated pool is 6,50,000 such visas every year, along with an additional 20,000 visas reserved for those who have earned advanced degrees in the US. Indian IT firms such as Infosys, Wipro, HCL, and Tata Consultancy Services, as well as US-based firms like IBM and Cognizant, which rely heavily on H1B workers, are expected to be impacted significantly. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pgs 2, 5, 6 & 7

WHAT DID INDIA SAY?

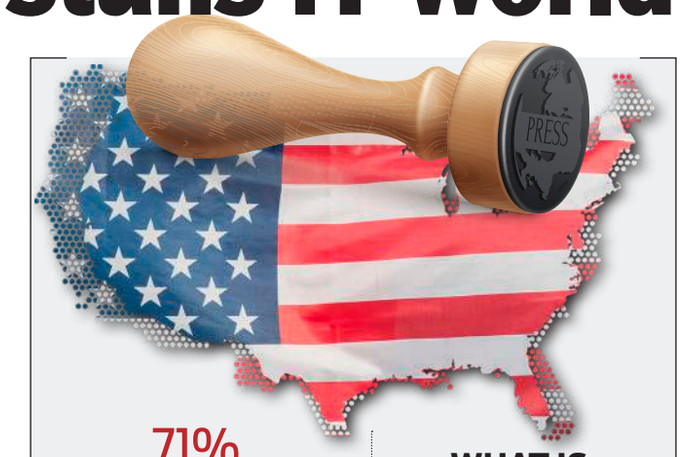
India said the Trump administration's new restrictions on H1B visa programme are likely to have humanitarian consequences and hoped that the "disruptions" would be addressed suitably by the American authorities.

"India has no major enemy today, but in true terms, India's biggest adversary is dependence on other nation. Greater foreign dependence leads to greater national failure -Narendra Modi, PM



THE WAIT TRAP

Indians on work visas in the US are caught in a decades-long wait for Green Cards, and the new move could have an impact on whether they can continue to stay in the US.



71% of H1B holders are Indians.

Total H1B visas in FY25 **1,06,922**

13,870 (13%) of these went to Indian firms.

Foreign STEM (Science, Tech, Engg & Maths) workers in US: **25 lakh**

Previous price: **$4,500** (Rs 4 lakh).

New price: **$1,00,000** (RS 88 lakh).

WHAT IS H1B VISA?

IT IS A TEMPORARY WORK PERMIT SYSTEM IN THE US, ENABLING FIRMS TO RECRUIT FOREIGN WORKERS.

Amul cuts prices of 700 items, ghee to be cheaper by ₹40

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets dairy products under the Amul brand, has announced a reduction in retail prices for over 700 product packs, including ghee, butter, ice cream, bakery items, and frozen snacks, effective from 22 September, 2023. The price revision includes a decrease in the MRP of butter (100g) to Rs 58 from Rs 62, while ghee prices have been slashed by Rs 40 to Rs 610 per litre. The MRP of Amul processed cheese block (1kg) has been cut by Rs 30 to Rs 545. Frozen paneer (200gm) will now cost Rs 95, down from Rs 99. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

India warns citizens against fake job offers in Iran

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

India has issued a warning to its citizens seeking employment in Iran, urging them to exercise "strictest vigilance" due to a rise in fake job offers. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reported several cases where Indian nationals were lured to Iran with false promises of work or assurances of jobs in third countries. "Upon reaching Iran, these Indian nationals have been kidnapped by criminal gangs and ransoms have been demanded from their families for securing their release," the MEA stated. It highlighted that Iran only permits visa-free entry for tourists, warning that any agents offering visa-free employment may be involved with criminal gangs. *—PTI*

Social media post triggers violence in Vadodara

VADODARA, 20 SEPT

Police detained around 50 people in Vadodara of Gujarat on Saturday following late-night rioting over a social media post in Junigadhi area, officials said. A few people including cops were injured in stone-pelting but the situation was brought under control. Members of a community gathered outside the city police station on Friday claiming that a post hurt their religious sentiments, and demanded action against the person who uploaded it. Another group of around 500 to 600 members started stone-pelting and vandalised vehicles in Junigadhi area of Old City. Two separate FIRs were registered. *—PTI*

CM says Christian sub-castes dropped from caste survey

GADAG, 20 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has clarified that Christian sub-castes have been removed from the ongoing caste census following public controversy. Speaking to reporters in Gadag on Saturday, he accused the BJP of politicising the issue and reiterated that the Backward Classes Commission, a statutory body, acted independently.

"It is not me who removed it. We cannot interfere or direct the Commission. We only provided guidelines," he said. He confirmed that Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot had forwarded a letter submitted by BJP leaders raising concerns about the survey. The Governor had warned the survey might cause "social disturbance, long-term complications, and irreparable damage" to the state's social fabric.

Responding to BJP's claim that the Congress is dividing castes, Siddaramaiah said, "We are not breaking castes. Without understanding the socio-educational and economic status of people, how can we frame policies?" He questioned whether the Centre's proposed 2028 caste census could also be labelled a conspiracy, as alleged by some religious leaders.

Chief Minister inaugurates the Silver Jubilee of the Taluk Kuruba Association and the State-level Kanakotsava **PHOTO: X/ @SIDDARAMAIAH**

He dismissed reports of cabinet Opposition, asserting full consensus on the survey. He described the exercise as a comprehensive socio-economic, educational, and employment survey aimed at ensuring social equality by identifying deprived communities.

The survey will run from 22 September to 7 October, costing Rs 420 crore.

Around 1.75 lakh teachers will act as enumerators, each covering 120–150 households over 15 days. "Enumerators will ask about caste, religion, education, and jobs," Siddaramaiah said, emphasising the need to understand the true demographic landscape of the state. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

SIT to probe Aland 'vote deletion'

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Karnataka government on Saturday constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate allegations of large-scale deletion of voters from electoral rolls in Kalaburagi district's Aland constituency during the 2023 assembly polls.

The move follows Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's claims that a significant number of voters were removed in Aland segment during the 2023 elections and that Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar was protecting the "vote chors."

The SIT will be headed by Additional Director General of Police (CID), who will be assisted by two Superintendent of Police rank officers Saidulu Adavath and Shubhanwita.

The development comes after Aland MLA BR Patil lodged a police complaint stating that 6,670 voters across 256 polling stations were unlawfully removed from the electoral rolls.

Subsequent verification by the election officers revealed that applications were submitted for deletion of 6,018 voters, of which only 24 were found to be valid and legally processed, the MLA was quoted as saying in a government order.

The remaining 5,994 applications were allegedly filed using different mobile numbers, without the knowledge of the concerned voters, and with mala fide intent. *—PTI*

Saudi will defend Pak if attacked, says Asif

ISLAMABAD, 20 SEPT

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has announced that Saudi Arabia will back Pakistan in the event of a war with India, under a newly signed Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement.

The accord ensures that an attack on either country will be treated as an attack on both, warranting a joint response.

While the agreement reinforces long-standing security ties, Asif's remarks about Pakistan's nuclear capabilities sparked confusion. Speaking to Geo TV, he implied that Pakistan's defence capabilities could be extended to Saudi Arabia. However, in a later interview with Reuters, he denied that nuclear weapons were part of the deal.

Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan declined to clarify, stating only that Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is "evolving". *—ANI*

Jawan dies as hunt for terrorists intensifies in J&K

JAMMU, 20 SEPT

A soldier, who was critically injured in a gunfight, succumbed to his injuries as security forces on Saturday extended a search operation to neutralise terrorists hiding in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said.

The soldier, Lance Dafadar Baldev Chand, was injured late on Friday, when the terrorists opened fire on a joint patrolling party of the Army and the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police at Kanji in the Seoj Dhar forest, between the Dudu-Basantgarh area of Udhampur and Bhaderwah in Doda district, the officials said.

The area around the scene of the encounter was kept under tight cordon during the night and a combing operation was resumed on Saturday morning and extended to new areas during the day to track down the terrorists.

The officials said reinforcements were mobilised from both Doda and Udhampur and drones and sniffer dogs were also deployed to speed up the search operation.

However, there was no fresh contact with the terrorists during the day, they added. *—PTI*

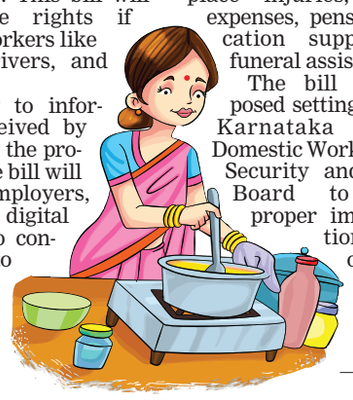
Karnataka plans bill to ensure minimum wage for domestic help

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

The State government is scheduled to table the Domestic Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill which will ensure guaranteed minimum income, social welfare benefits and job security. This bill will protect the rights if domestic workers like maids, drivers, and cooks.

According to information received by Salar News, the proposals in the bill will mandate employers, agencies, or digital platforms to contribute up to 5 per cent of wages as a welfare fee to a dedicated Social Security and Welfare Fund. Both employers and service providers will also be expected to register themselves formally with the government. Employers will also be required to extend benefits such as compensation for workplace injuries, medical expenses, pensions, education support, and funeral assistance.

The bill also proposed setting up of the Karnataka State Domestic Workers Social Security and Welfare Board to ensure proper implementation and to oversee grievance redressal.



—Agecnies

350 FILMS LATER...

Mohanlal gets Dadasaheb Phalke Award

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

- With a career spanning more than four decades, Mohanlal has acted in over 350 films across Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and Kannada.

Malayalam cinema icon Mohanlal has been named the recipient of the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2023, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry announced on Saturday.

The award, India's highest honour in cinema, will be presented during the 71st National Film Awards ceremony on 23 September.

The Ministry, in a post on X, hailed Mohanlal for his "iconic contribution to Indian cinema". Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated the 65-year-old, praising his "excellence and versatility".

Mohanlal's illustrious career spans over four decades, with more than 350 films to his credit across Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and Kannada. Known for his effortless screen presence and exceptional range, his acclaimed films include 'Thanmathra', 'Iruvar', 'Drishyam', 'Vanaprastham', 'Company', and 'Pulimurugan'.

He made his acting debut with 'Thiranottam' in 1978, though its release was delayed due to censorship. His official screen debut came in 1980 with the hit 'Manjil Virinja Pookkal'.

Mohanlal has received five National Film Awards, two for Best Actor, one Special Jury Mention, one Special Jury Award, and one for Best Feature Film. He also holds nine Kerala State Awards and multiple international accolades.

He was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2001 and the Padma Bhushan in 2019 for his contributions to the arts.

The 2023 award announcement was delayed due to disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mohanlal was recently seen in 'Hridayapoorvam', a romantic comedy-drama directed by Sathyan Anthikad and released during Onam. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Singer Venkatesh Kumar to get Sangeetha Vidwan

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Renowned Hindustani vocalist Pandit M Venkatesh Kumar has been selected for this year's State Sangeetha Vidwan award, Karnataka Minister for Kannada and Culture and Backward Classes Welfare Shivaraj Tangadagi announced on Saturday. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will present the honour to Kumar during the 'Nada Habba Dasara' celebrations, at a special ceremony in front of the Mysuru Palace on 22 September. The award carries a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh, a memento and a citation. Kumar, a native of Lakshmipura in Ballari district, is celebrated for his soulful voice and immense contributions to Hindustani classical music, particularly the Kirana and Gwalior gharanas, two of its major schools. Tangadagi said Kumar has won wide acclaim in India and abroad through his renditions. ***—Salar News with Agencies***

TTD plans Venkateswara temple in Belagavi

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) board has approved plans for a new temple in Belagavi, designed to benefit devotees from North Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra. This announcement was made by TTD board member S Naresh Kumar during a press conference at the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Malleswaram. The proposed temple site is located near Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi, with construction to be funded through the Srivani Trust. TTD chairman BR Naidu is expected to visit Belagavi soon to assess the site and guide the next steps, Kumar added.***—PTI***

Foundation for Mysuru Ambedkar Bhavan finally laid

MYSURU, 20 SEPT

The construction of the long-delayed Dr BR Ambedkar Bhavan in Mysuru will be completed soon with the State government releasing Rs 23.83 crore for it, State Social Welfare Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa said. He was speaking on Saturday after laying the foundation stone for the construction works in Mysuru. The building commissioned in 2012, on two acres of land on Dewan's road in Devaraja Mohalla near Devaraja Police Station, was moving at a snails pace for the past 15 years, allegedly due to a lack of funds. An approval for completion of this project was given by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at the special Cabinet meeting held at MM Hills recently. ***—Salar News***

Goa asks State to help tame rogue elephant

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Karnataka Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre said the State would help Goa capture a rogue elephant. Speaking at a joint press conference after discussions with a Goa delegation which including Goan Forest Minister Vishwajit Rane at Vikas Soudha, Khandre said that a rogue elephant named Omkar has recently been creating havoc and causing crop damage. Although the Goa government requested Karnataka to send trained kumki elephants to assist in Omkar, Khandre said that the with Dasara festivities underway, no kumki elephant can be given. "We will discuss Goa's request with our Chief Minister, and since the Goa forest area borders Maharashtra, it is also necessary to hold talks with the Maharashtra Chief Minister," he said. ***—Salar News***

Please fix roads: Peenya industries

Say firms are mulling moving to other states

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

The Peenya Industrial Association has appealed to Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to take urgent action to repair pothole-ridden roads and strengthen infrastructure inside and around the Peenya Industrial Area (PIA), claiming that prolonged neglect could prompt industries to shift operations to neighbouring states.

In a letter addressed to the Deputy Chief Minister on Friday, association president Danappa DP highlighted that roads within Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) and Karnataka State Small Industries Development Corporation (KSSIDC) developed areas, as well as more than 25 adjoining private industrial areas, are full of potholes and damaged stretches.

"The poor condition of roads poses serious risks to goods movement and is causing daily hardships for industries," he said.

Danappa claimed that due to prolonged neglect, many companies are considering relocating their operations to neighbouring states, or have already begun doing so, where industrial infrastructure and connectivity are better maintained.

He claimed that if the situation continues, State could face a massive loss of investment and employment, a decline in State revenues, and "damage its image as a progressive industrial hub."

The PIA President noted that the situation has worsened in recent months, causing damage to industrial goods during transportation, breakage of precision machinery, delays in the movement of raw materials and finished products, loss of customer confidence, traffic congestion, accidents, and increased logistics costs.

Danappa urged the government to immediately begin road repairs and pothole filling, and to draw up a comprehensive, long-term plan for road improvement. *—PTI*

The PIA said the situation has worsened recently, with industrials goods being damaged during transportation ***PHOTO: ANI***

> **Another name for development is our Bengaluru**
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

Resolving potholes a priority, says DKS

'Committed to systematically fixing the issue'

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday reaffirmed the government's resolve to address pothole problem in City, calling it a priority for the administration.

He said that the work is being carried out systematically and urged political opponents not to turn the issue into a controversy.

"We are committed to resolving the pothole problem and are working in a systematic manner. Those who want to do politics may do so," Shivakumar, who holds Bengaluru development portfolio, said.

"We have asked for a report from the Police Commissioner as well. The public also have an option to report potholes as well," he said.

He pointed out that no one intentionally creates potholes, but they surface due to excessive rain.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar ***PHOTO: PTI***

Giving figures, the Deputy CM said, "More than 7,000 potholes have already been filled. About 5,000 more potholes are yet to be filled. For this reason, a report has been sought from the Police Commissioner. A system has been put in place for the public and everyone to report whenever they notice potholes."

Shivakumar hit out at BJP legislators, saying "Each BJP MLA has been given Rs 25 crore for his constituency. Even from my grants, funds have been given to the constituencies of BJP MLAs in the city without any discrimination, yet why have they not had the potholes filled? Let them first do their share of work and then do politics."

Earlier, Shivakumar had said that the government would unveil its plan to fix the roads on Saturday. *—PTI*

This is not how you fill potholes: Pai

Former Infosys CFO Mohandas Pai slammed the way the government was fixing potholes, saying "don't you have good engineers who can tell you to fix potholes." He was replying to an X post by Bengaluru Central City Corporation, which was showing pothole filling work in the Chickpet Division area. "This is the wrong way to fill potholes," Pai wrote. "They will appear again."

EX INFY CFO SLAMS TRUMP

Pai: People won't pay $100K for H1B visa

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Former Infosys CFO and industry veteran Mohandas Pai has warned that the United States' decision to impose an annual fee of USD 100,000 on H1B visa applicants could significantly deter new applications from companies, potentially accelerating the trend towards offshoring in the coming months. President Donald Trump stated that the H1B visa programme has been misused to replace, rather than supplement, American workers.

Pai dismissed the idea that H1B visa holders are low-paid labour, noting that the average salary for the top 20 H1B employers exceeds USD 100,000. "People pay more than USD 100,000 as salaries... that doesn't hold water," he asserted. Despite this, he acknowledged that the impact of the fee will be "limited" in the short term, as it applies only to new applications and existing visas remain unaffected.

He predicted that companies would likely increase offshoring due to the high costs associated with the new fee. "In the next maybe six months to one year... this will happen," Pai added. *—PTI*

Mohandas Pai ***PHOTO: PTI***

JARKIHOLI BUYS CHOPPER FOR ₹30 CR

BELAGAVI, 20 SEPT

State Minister Satish Jarkiholi has purchased a new Agusta helicopter, manufactured in Italy, for approximately Rs 30 crore. This double-engine model replaces his previous single-engine helicopter, which he sold. On Friday, he inspected the aircraft at Jakkur Aerodrome near City and announced on his Facebook that it will soon be ready to fly. He has made history as the first politician from North Karnataka to own a personal helicopter. It's believed this acquisition aids his party's efforts and preparations for 2028 elections. The helicopter, capable of high-altitude take-off & landing, accommodates five passengers, two pilots, with advanced safety & communication systems. *—Salar News*

Centre to procure groundnut, black gram, sunflower from State

BENGALURU, 20 SEPT

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Saturday said that under the Price Support Scheme system, the Central government will procure green gram, black gram, sunflower, groundnut, and soybean from Karnataka, which will greatly benefit the State's farming community.

The minister said he had requested the Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to approve the procurement of these crops grown in Karnataka during the 2025-26 Kharif season under the Price Support Scheme (PSS), as proposed by the State government.

"I am happy to share that the Union government has now approved this request," he said in a post on the social media platform X.

The letter dated 20 September from the Union Agriculture Minister to Joshi stated: "After due consideration, this Ministry has approved the procurement of 38,000 MT of Green Gram, 60,180 MT of Black Gram, 15,650 MT of Sunflower, 61,148 MT of Groundnut and 1,15,000 MT of Soyabean under PSS in Karnataka.

"The approval reflects (Centre's) unwavering commitment to safeguard the interests of farmers". *—PTI*

HC seeks govt's reply on caste survey

BENGALURU, 19 SEPT

The Karnataka High Court sought the State government's response to a set of Public Interest Litigations (PILs) questioning the legality of the upcoming Social and Educational Survey, slated to commence on 22 September.

A division bench of Justices Anu Sivaraman and Rajesh Rai K ordered on Friday that the petitions be listed for hearing on Monday and issued notices to the Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission as well as the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India.

The PILs have been filed by the Akhila Karnataka Brahmana Maha Sabha, members of the Akhila Bharata Veerashaiva Lingayata Mahasabha, Rajya Vokkaliga Sangha and individuals, including KN Subba Reddy, former president of the Advocates Association of Bengaluru. *—PTI*

Adichunchanagiri mutt seer Nirmalanandanatha Swami met with DyCM DK Shivakumar, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy and MC Sudhakar during a caste census meeting by Vokkaliga community at Vijayanagar in Bengaluru on Saturday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD***

Portion of gold, cash stolen from SBI recovered

VIJAYAPURA, 19 SEPT

A portion of the valuables that were recently stolen from a SBI bank branch in Vijaypura district was recovered with investigators tracing a bag containing 6.54 kg of gold and Rs 41.04 lakh in cash.

The recovery was made from an abandoned building in Huljanti village in Maharashtra' Solanpur district.

On 16 September, three masked men armed with country-made pistols and knives allegedly robbed a nationalised bank in Chadchan town, making off with cash and gold ornaments, after tying up the staff. They escaped with cash worth more than a crore and gold ornaments weighing approximately 20 kg, worth approximately Rs 20 crore, the FIR stated.

Vijaypura Superintendent of Police Laxman Nimbargi said that the suspects used a Suzuki EVA vehicle with a fake number plate for the offence and escaped towards Maharashtra.

When they reached Huljanti, their car hit a bike, leading to an altercation with the villagers. They abandoned the car, & fled after allegedly threatening them with weapons. *—PTI*

FESTIVAL BONANZA

This Dasara, tourist entry to Mysuru is tax free for 11 days

MYSURU, 20 SEPT

The State government announced tax free entry to Mysuru and KRS dam for tourists vehicles registered in other States on the occasion of Dasara. The exemption is applicable for the 11 day period between 22 Sept-2 Oct.

Tourist vehicles from other States heading to Mysuru during the Dasara festival will be exempt from paying permit tax, the Karnataka Transport Department. An order to this effect was issued by Undersecretary to the Department of Transport Pushpa on Saturday.

The waiver will apply only to tourist vehicles entering Mysuru city and the nearby Srirangapatna taluk, according to the department's official notification. It is only applicable to vehicles registered outside Karnataka that are operating under special permits.

This exemption will come into effect from Monday and will run until the conclusion of the Dasara celebrations on 2 October.

The Transport Department clarified that the waiver is in the public interest and introduced under the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1957.

Dasara, which will begin in Mysuru from Monday, is one of the State's most celebrated events, drawing large numbers of visitors from across the world.

The tax waiver is intended to encourage more tourists to visit Mysuru during the festival.

There are several tourist attractions in Mysuru, which will be lit up for the festival. Srirangapatna, located near Mysuru city also houses popular tourist spots like Brindavan Gardens and Krishna Raja Sagar (KRS) Dam, both of which draw large crowds during Dasara. *—Salar News*

The tax waiver is intended to encourage tourists from other states to visit Mysuru during the Dasara festival, which will take place between 22 Sept and 2 Oct ***PHOTO: PTI***

3 fined for shooting reels near jumbos

The Forest Department has penalised three persons for shooting reels in front of the Dasara elephants, imposing a fine of Rs 1,000 each. On 18 September, a girl reportedly entered restricted areas, shot reels and uploaded them on social media. Deputy Conservator of Forests Prabhugowda said the department collected Rs 3,000 in penalties for uploading pictures despite a ban on such activities. He said that visitors are prohibited from entering restricted zones where mahouts and kavadi caretakers tend to Dasara jumbos. The department has warned that stricter action will follow if visitors continue to flout restrictions meant to protect elephants during the festival.

Metro commuters face delays on Yellow Line

BENGULURU, 20 SEPT

Commuters on City's Namma Metro, particularly along the RV Road–Bommasandra Yellow Line, are increasingly frustrated due to inadequate parking facilities at several stations. Meanwhile, the Purple Line suffers from staffing shortages, forcing passengers to endure ticket queues of up to 30 minutes.

Students, who represent a large portion of metro users, lament that such delays have caused them to miss classes. "It sometimes takes longer to travel by metro than by BMTC buses," they said, urging the Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) to take action.

On the Yellow Line, parking is a significant issue; of the 16 stations, only 11 provide parking, leaving five stations without any options. Commuters are parking in nearby residential areas, aggravating local residents. *—Agencies*

Mirwaiz visits residence of ex-Hurriyat chief

SRINAGAR, 20 SEPT

Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Saturday visited the residence of former Hurriyat leader Abdul Gani Bhat in Botingoo, Sopore, to convey his condolences following Bhat's death. Mirwaiz had been under house detention for three days and was released earlier in the day before heading to Bhat's home. Abdul Gani Bhat, who passed away on Wednesday night at the age of 90, was widely regarded as a moderate figure within the separatist leadership and served as Hurriyat's chairman. In a statement issued by his office, Mirwaiz described Bhat's death as a personal loss, remembering him as an affectionate elder, a dear friend, and a guide. He expressed profound sorrow over the demise and extended heartfelt condolences to Bhat's family. *—PTI*

Rajat Sharma elected as prez of news body

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Veteran television journalist Rajat Sharma has been unanimously re-elected as President of the News Broadcasters and Digital Association (NBDA). The decision was made during the board meeting held in New Delhi on Friday. Alongside Sharma's re-election, MV Shreyams Kumar, managing director of Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Co Ltd, has been appointed as vice president, while Anuradha Prasad Shukla, chairperson and managing director of News24 Broadcast India Ltd, takes on the role of honorary treasurer. The NBDA Board also includes notable members such as Rahul Joshi, managing director of Network18 Media and Investments Limited and Kalli Purie Bhandal, vice chairperson and MD of TV Today Network Ltd. *—PTI*

Disha Patani house firing: UP CM calls shooter 'demon'

LUCKNOW, 20 SEPT

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday sought to equate a shooter arrested in connection with a firing incident at actor Disha Patani's house in Bareilly to "Maareech", a demon expert in disguising himself. Speaking at a function held at the Lok Bhawan here, Adityanath said, "A criminal involved in women-related crime came from outside (the state). He possibly entered like Maareech, but when the Uttar Pradesh Police's bullet hit him, he said he wrongly entered the state and will never show this audacity (again)." He said this has to be done with every criminal who disturbs women's safety. One of the five shooters and his associate was arrested by the police. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Poonam Pandey cast in Ramleela, VHP, BJP fume

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The Luv Kush Ramleela Committee in Delhi has sparked controversy by appointing model-actress Poonam Pandey to portray 'Mandodari', Ravana's wife, in its upcoming Ramleela performance. The decision has drawn criticism from both the BJP and VHP, who have called for her replacement. Praveen Shankar Kapoor, head of the BJP's media cell and a senior vice-president of the committee, urged organisers to reconsider, stating that "Pandey has not only been off the screen for years but is also known for controversies over her photos and videos on social media." However, Arjun Kumar, president of the Luv Kush Ramleela Committee, asserted, "We don't see anything wrong with a woman playing a character which represents goodness in the Ramleela." *—PTI*

Foreign reliance is India's foe: Modi

He says nation must become self-reliant

BHAVNAGAR, 20 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the gathering during the 'Samudra se Samruddhi' event in Bhavnagar, Gujarat **PHOTO: PTI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India's main adversary is its dependence on other nations as he made a strong pitch for "aatmanirbharta" and called for indigenous production of everything from semiconductor chips to ships.

Speaking at the 'Samudra se Samruddhi' event, where he inaugurated and laid foundation stones of projects worth Rs 34,200 crore, Modi said all the problems of India have only one solution, and that is self-reliance.

"India is moving forward with the spirit of global brotherhood and India has no major enemy in the world today, but in true terms, India's biggest adversary is dependence on other nations," stated the Prime Minister, emphasising that this dependence must be collectively defeated.

He said greater foreign dependence leads to greater national failure. "For global peace, stability, and prosperity, the world's most populous country must become self-reliant," Modi said, and cautioned that reliance on others compromises national self-respect.

"The future of 140 crore Indians cannot be left to external forces, nor can the resolve for national development be based on foreign dependence. The future of the coming generations cannot be left to others. If the country with a population of 140 crore is dependent on others, it compromises national self-respect," he added.

As per a popular saying, pain of 100 kinds has only one remedy; similarly, all problems of India have one solution, and that is aatmanirbharta (self-reliance), Modi stated.

Targeting Congress, Modi said the talent of young people was suppressed after Independence by the then ruling party which brought in a "license Raj".

The PM said a historic decision has been taken to strengthen the maritime sector, with large ships now accorded the infrastructure status. He said the government is working on three major schemes to make India a maritime power. *—PTI*

Oppn flays 'weak' PM over H1B visa

Kharge says Modi got nice b'day return gift

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

After the US imposed a USD 100,000 annual fee for H1B visas for highly skilled workers, the Congress on Saturday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of being a "weak PM" whose preference for "strategic silence" and "loud optics" has become a liability for India.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also said that foreign policy is about safeguarding India's national interests and keeping "India First" and not holding "events".

The Congress chief said, "Narendra Modi ji, Indians are pained by the return gifts you have received after the birthday call.

USD 100,000 annual fee on H1B visas hits Indian tech workers the hardest, 70 per cent of H1B visa holders are Indians and with 50 per cent tariff already imposed, a loss of Rs 2.17 Lakh crore to India is already estimated in 10 sectors alone, he said

He said the HIRE Act targeted Indian outsourcing. He also called the lifting of exemption to the Chabahar port a "loss to our strategic interests".

Congress leader Pawan Khera tagged Gandhi on X with media reports that the H1B visa issue did not figure in the talks between US President Donald Trump and Modi.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said the Centre's foreign and economic policies have failed. *—PTI*

Rahul Gandhi @RahulGandhi · 9h
I repeat, India has a weak PM.
Home / Immigration / Indians hold 71% of H-1B visa...
Indians hold 71% of H-1B visas - Trump's Rs 90 lakh fee hits them hardest
Trump orders $100,000 H-1B visa fee, hitting Indian techies hardest. Lawyers warn of lawsuits, Microsoft issues travel guidance

Rahul Gandhi reposted a 2017 post where he had questioned Modi for not taking up H1B visa issue with US President Donald Trump **PHOTO: X**

EC didn't inform Karnataka CID about 'vote chori': Rahul

WAYENAD, 20 SEPT

Rahul Gandhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused the Election Commission of not providing information sought by the Karnataka CID regarding the alleged 'vote chori' in that state.

Rahul, who arrived in Wayanad on 19 September along with his mother Sonia, that Karnataka CID has sent several letters to the EC seeking information about the numbers used in the 'vote chori'. Gyanesh Kumar, the chief election commissioner (CEC) did not provide the information sought.

Rahul further said that the Congress would show evidence of the alleged 'vote chori' "in such a manner that no one would have any doubt that PM Narendra Modi did it and won the election.

He said he would reveal a hydrogen bomb with proof.

Reiterating its allegations of "vote theft" in the Delhi assembly elections, the AAP claimed that the Election Commission was covering up irregularities and withholding information on voter deletions.

AAP's Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bharadwaj said the party had flagged "vote-chori" in the high-profile New Delhi constituency, which saw a contest between AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal, BJP's Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma and Congress' Sandeep Dikshit in the polls.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Prasenjit Bose said that Rahul Gandhi would lead the anti-SIR stir in West Bengal ahead of next year's assembly polls if the EC "repeated the mistakes it made in Bihar" while conducting the exercise. Bose said he expected a political realignment of the opposition parties against BJP during the SIR of rolls took place in West Bengal. *—PTI*

India, Canada to work towards 'new chapter' in bilateral ties

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

India and Canada have agreed to adopt a collaborative approach towards a new chapter in bilateral ties, including working closely to combat terrorism and transnational crimes, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Saturday.

National security advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval and his Canadian counterpart Nathalie Drouin held wide-ranging talks in New Delhi with a focus on repairing the bilateral relations that came under severe strain following a diplomatic spat over the killing of a Sikh separatist in 2023.

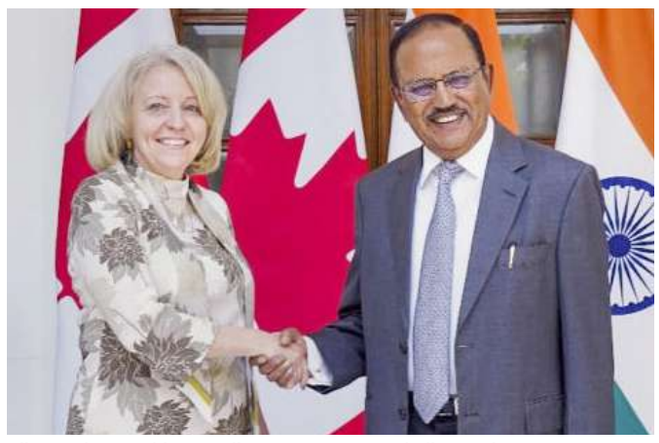
In June, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney on the margins of the G7 summit at Kananaskis in Canada. Both the leaders agreed to pursue "constructive" steps to restore stability in India-Canada ties.

It was also an opportunity to follow up on the discussions between Prime Minister Modi and his Canadian counterpart Carney, the MEA said on Doval-Drouin talks.

"They agreed to strengthen security cooperation and further reinforce existing mechanisms of engagement," the MEA said in a statement.

They also deliberated on the priority areas for future cooperation and exchanged views on regional and global developments.

The talks between the two NSAs came three weeks after India and Canada appointed envoys to each other's capitals.India-Canada relations hit rock bottom following then prime minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of a potential Indian link to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. *—PTI*



Ajit Doval meets his Canadian counterpart Nathalie Drouin **PHOTO: PTI**

- National security advisor Ajit Doval and his Canadian counterpart Nathalie Drouin held wide-ranging talks in New Delhi with a focus on repairing the bilateral relations that came under severe strain.

Kerala to spend ₹1,000 cr on Sabarimala revamp

PATHANAMTHITTAL, 20 SEPT

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday announced at the Global Ayyappa Sangam that projects worth over Rs 1,000 crore would be executed for the development of Sabarimala to make pilgrimage to the Lord Ayyappa shrine safe and convenient for the devotees.

A total of Rs 1,033.62 crore will be spent on the different phases of development of Sannidhanam, Pamba, and the trek route to the hill-shrine. They are expected to be completed by 2039.

Over Rs 300 crore will be spent to improve the basic facilities for the devotees, he said.

Referring to the opposition to the conclave by the Congress and BJP, Vijayan said that some persons masquerading as devotees tried to obstruct the conclave by going all the way to the Supreme Court.

Delegates from 15 countries will attend the summit, alongside participants from various Indian states.

Leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly VD Satheesan termed Vijayan as a "fake devotee".Satheesan said the state government had no answers regarding the affidavit filed in the Supreme Court on women's entry to the hill shrine. *—PTI*

Vijay takes political fight directly to Stalin's home turf

TIRUVARUR, 20 SEPT

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam chief, actor-politician Vijay on Saturday took his political fight directly to DMK President and Chief Minister MK Stalin's native turf of Tiruvarur and said his party's goal is to ensure that there is no "family dominance" in Tamil Nadu.

Vijay, who spoke on the fishermen issues in nearby Nagapattinam, sported a green headgear and addressed farmers' grievances and sought an answer from CM Stalin.

Beginning his speech by mentioning about the iconic Tiruvarur temple car and late Chief Minister M Karunanidhi's assertion that he made it ply, Vijay compared the state to a chariot and alleged that the DMK icon's son, Stalin, by placing wooden logs has blocked the state's progress.

The DMK named several schemes after Karunanidhi and attempted to bring a pen-based monument for him. However, in Tiruvarur, the home town of Karunanidhi, lacks even the basic road amenities. Like Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur too has a large number of huts.

Targeting the Centre, the TVK chaif asked whether the Central University in Tiruvarur has all the departments. "It will not be there," he answered. *—PTI*

MURMU IN BIHAR

President Droupadi Murmu performed the 'pind daan' rituals and 'jal tarpan' at the Vishnupad temple for the salvation of her ancestors' souls, in Gayaji in Bihar on Friday. **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

ONLY HINDUS AT GARBAS

VHP calls for meat ban during Navratri

MUMBAI/GURUGRAM, 20 SEPT

HP said only Hindus must be given entry to 'garba' events marking Navratri **PHOTO: PTI**

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Gurugram, has submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner requesting that all meat and fish shops operating in the district be closed immediately ahead of Navratri celebrations, an official said on Saturday.

The memorandum stated that such shops operating near temples, educational institutions, and residential areas hurt the sentiments of devotees and cause inconvenience to citizens, according to an official statement.

Additionally, the memorandum alleged that food safety standards and hygiene regulations are being violated in many shops, posing serious threats to public health.

Meanwhile, VHP said only Hindus must be given entry to 'garba' events marking Navratri and advised organisers to check the Aadhaar card of entrants for identification.

While Maharashtra Minister and senior BJP leader Chandrashekhar Bawankule said organisers have the right to set conditions of entry at an event, provided it is being held with police permission, the Congress' Vijay Wadettiwar slammed the VHP for wanting to "set society on fire".

Navratri, among the most patronised festivals in the state, will be observed from 22 September to 1 October.

He said the VHP has issued advisories asking garba event organisers to check Aadhaar cards at entry points, apply 'tilak' on participants and ensure they perform puja before entering.

, Bawankule said it was within the rights of the organising committees to impose such (entry) restrictions. *—PTI*

CJI warns of bias in orders against govt

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Chief Justice of India BR Gavai on Saturday urged non-judicial tribunal members, often former bureaucrats, to reflect on their reluctance to pass orders against the government. Speaking at the 10th All India Conference of the Central Admini strative Tribunal (CAT) 2025, in the presence of Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and Minister of State Jitendra Singh, he highlighted challenges facing tribunals and the justice delivery system.

CJI Gavai said tribunals occupy a unique space between the executive and judiciary, combining administrative experience with judicial reasoning. He stressed the need for consistent training, regular workshops, and uniform appointment criteria to strengthen effectiveness and public trust.

Flagging the multiplicity of appeals, he noted bureaucrats often "pass the buck" to courts, prolonging litigation and delaying justice, sometimes until officials retire. He also called for standardised service conditions for tribunal members and criticised some judges' conduct, urging mutual respect between judges and lawyers.

He praised CAT and state tribunals for reducing case backlogs and underscored the responsibility of judicial officers to deliver impartial justice to citizens. *—PTI*

R'than bars students from skipping schools

JAIPUR, 20 SEPT

The Rajasthan High Court has directed the CBSE and Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education to ensure pupils of classes 9 to 12 attend school rather than coaching centers during school hours. A bench of Justices Dinesh Mehta and Anoop Kumar Dhand ordered both boards to carry out inspections to check attendance. The court said school attendance is compulsory and warned that unjustified absences would lead to disciplinary action against students, schools and officials. It instructed the state and boards to form special investigation teams to conduct random checks on schools and coaching centers, with strict action against violators. Students may be barred from board exams if studies are disrupted mid-session.—*PTI*

Kurmis launch road blockade over ST status in J'khand

RANCHI, 20 SEPT

Defying prohibitory orders, members of the Adivasi Kurmi Samaj (AKS) staged a rail blockade at several stations in Jharkhand on Saturday, partially disrupting train services. Protesters occupied tracks at Rai in Ranchi, Parasnath in Giridih and Chandrapura in Bokaro, demanding Scheduled Tribe status for the Kurmi community and inclusion of the Kurmali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The railways said three trains, including Hatia–Barddhaman and Tatanagar–Gua MEMUs, were cancelled, one short-terminated and four others controlled. Ranchi district authorities imposed Section 163 around key stations to restrict gatherings, weapons and demonstrations. Police will deploy additional forces, install CCTV and drones, and coordinate with railway staff.— *PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Kerala imposes Rs 60L fine for waste dumping

T"PURAM, 20 SEPT

Kerala has imposed fines of over Rs 60 lakh in one year for dumping waste in public spaces based on cases reported via a dedicated WhatsApp number run by the Local Self Government Department (LSGD), officials said on Saturday. An official statement said Rs 61.47lakh in penalties was levied in 755 cases, with prosecution proceedings initiated in 63 incidents. In total, Rs 11.01 crore was collected in fines for waste dumping during the year, of which 5.58 per cent came from WhatsApp complaints. Informants were rewarded Rs 1.29 lakh for submitting proof of violations. Of 12,265 complaints received, 7,912 were verified and action was taken in 7,362 cases. —*PTI*

Woman finds 8 diamonds at mine in Madhya Pradesh

PANNA, 20 SEPT

A woman labourer in her 50s has found eight diamonds, worth several lakh rupees, at a mine in Panna district, Madhya Pradesh, officials said on Saturday. Rachna Goldar, a local resident and mother of three, discovered the stones while digging on her leased eight-metre plot in the Hazara Mudda area. The diamonds weigh a total of 2.53 carats, including six high-quality stones; the largest is 0.79 carat, while two are off-colour, said diamond expert Anupam Singh. Goldar has deposited the diamonds at the district diamond office, where they will be auctioned. After a 12 per cent government deduction, the remaining proceeds will go to her, which will help in improving her financial condition. —*PTI*

Manipur tense again as 2 Assam Rifles jawans killed

Locals protest against ambush; Hunt on to nab attackers

IMPHAL, 20 SEPT

Locals of Nambol in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Saturday morning staged protests against the killing of two Assam Rifles personnel in an ambush in the area the previous day.

Search operations were conducted in the area for the attackers and the vehicle used by them.

The locals, wearing traditional mourning attire, raised slogans and held placards condemning the attack and for "creating fear and panic among the public", at a sit-in demonstration.

Later, women took out a protest rally denouncing the attack, and criticised the opening of fire in public places.

Two jawans of the Assam Rifles were killed and five others were injured when a group of armed men ambushed a vehicle of the paramilitary force in Nambol Sabal Leikai area on 19 September. The vehicle was on its way from Imphal to Bishnupur. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

An uneasy calm prevailed in the state capital Imphal, and Bishnupur district on Saturday morning.

One of the protesters, S Bungo, said, "What exactly did the armed men want to achieve through this barbaric and unprovoked attack?"

The Kuki Zo Council also condemned the attack that occurred at a place in Imphal Valley where AFSPA was not in force. The deceased were identified as Naib Subedar Shyam Gurung and Rifleman Ranjit Singh Kashyap.

Assam Rifles did not retaliate to prevent injuries in a public place where the ambush occurred.

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla condemned the attack. The Manipur government announced Rs 5 lakh ex gratia each for the families of the two jawans who were killed and Rs 2 lakh each for the injured personnel. —*PTI*

Security personnel keep vigil outside the hospital where injured jawans of Assam Rifles are undergoing treatment after the attack by unidentified assailants in Manipur's Bishnupur on 19 September **PHOTO: PTI**

- The locals, wearing traditional mourning attire, raised slogans and held placards condemning the attack and for "creating fear and panic among the public", at a sit-in demonstration. Later, women took out a protest rally denouncing the attack.

NATURE'S FURY

4 swept in rains in Andhra Pradesh; 4 dead in M'rashtra

RAYACHOTI, 20 SEPT

Several persons were swept away in flood waters triggered by heavy rains in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra

Four persons were washed away in two separate rain-related incidents Andhra Pradesh' Annamayya district.

Sheik Munni, 28, and her minor son were washed away in heavy rainwater flow at the SM Colony area of Rayachoti town on 19 September.

Munni stepped out to fetch a candle as there was a power cut, but the stone slab paved over the drainage in front of her house broke, resulting in her falling into the heavily flowing drain with her minor son.

Her neighbour, Ganesh tried to rescue them, but he also got washed away in the heavy water current and all three died.

In another incident, an eight-year-old girl was washed away in heavy rainwater at the four taps area of Rayachoti town when she stepped out of an autorickshaw.

Meanwhile, bodies of four persons that were swept away amid heavy rains in Maharashtra's Latur were recovered after search operations. Sudershan Kerba Ghonshetty, 27, drowned in Tirru river, while five persons were swept away in strong currents in Jalkot. —*PTI*

People shield themselves from rains in Hyderabad **PHOTO: PTI**

M'rashtra farmers can lease land to pvt entities

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

Tribal farmers in Maharashtra will soon be able to lease their land to private entities for agricultural purposes or mineral excavation, which will enable them to generate additional income, state Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule said.

Officials said the move would also safeguard their ownership rights.

Bawankule said the government would soon bring in a law on it.

At present, tribal farmers are not permitted to independently enter into lease agreements with private entities.

The proposed change is aimed at giving them a direct access to private investment and generate additional income from their holdings.

According to the minister, the agreements will require participation of the district collector to ensure transparency and fairness in the process.

PHOTO: AI

The minimum lease rent will be Rs 50,000 per acre annually or Rs 1,25,000 per hectare a year. Farmers and private parties can mutually decide on a higher amount.

The tribal farmers can at present enter into memorandums of understanding with private companies for mineral excavation if major or minor minerals are discovered on their land. Farmers would receive monetary benefits per tonne or per brass of minerals extracted. —*PTI*

Driver of Puja Khedkar's father arrested in kidnapping case

THANE, 20 SEPT

The Navi Mumbai police have arrested the driver of former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar's father in connection with the road rage incident in which the helper of a truck was abducted last week.

The accused, Praful Salunkhe, was apprehended by a police team on 19 September from Sindhkhedraja in Dhule, Deputy Commissioner of Police Pankaj Dahane said.

He was produced before the court, which remanded him in police custody till 23 September.

Puja Khedkar's father, Dilip Khedkar, her mother Manorama and one more person are still absconding.

PHOTO: ANI

The incident occurred on 13 September in Navi Mumbai after a concrete mixer truck brushed against a Land Cruiser car, leading to an argument between the driver and helper of the vehicle and two occupants of the luxury car, who demanded money for damages.

Dilip and Salunkhe, allegedly bundled the truck's helper, Pralhad Kumar Chouhan, into the SUV and took him to their bungalow in Pune, from where he was later rescued.

A case was registered. Manorama was also booked for tampering with evidence.

Puja is accused of misrepresenting facts in her application for the 2022 UPSC civil services examination to avail herself of reservation benefits. —*PTI*

- Dilip and Salunkhe, allegedly bundled the truck's helper, Pralhad Kumar Chouhan, into the SUV and took him to their bungalow in Pune.

Polygamy not for Muslim men lacking means: Kerala HC

KOCHI, 20 SEPT

The Kerala High Court has ruled that a Muslim man cannot contract multiple marriages if he lacks the means to support his wives.

The court made the observation after a 39-year-old Perinthalmanna woman sought Rs 10,000 per month in maintenance from her blind husband, who survives through begging.

The family court dismissed her plea, noting his inability to pay. The high court noted that the husband, despite his circumstances, had threatened to enter a third marriage. He received Rs 25,000 from various sources but lived with his first wife , not providing for the second. —*PTI*

Over 100 Delhi schools receive bomb threats

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Over 100 schools in the national capital received bomb threats on Saturday morning, which were later declared 'hoax' after thorough checking.

The e-mail received at 6.10 am on Saturday came from a group, 'Terrorizers111'. The group had earlier also sent similar e-mails to schools, sources in the police said.

The subject of the e-mail mentioned "Bombs Placed in Your Building - React or Face the Disaster."

The Delhi Fire Services received information about 10 schools. However, after thorough checking of the premises, they were declared a hoax.

Bomb disposal squads and police teams were rushed to the campuses. Students and staff members were evacuated as a precautionary measure.

"We have thoroughly checked the campuses. Nothing suspicious has been found," a senior police officer said.

Authorities are probing the source of the threats and whether they were part of a coordinated attempt to create panic. —*PTI*

J&K intelligence wing detains 7 after raids

SRINAGAR, 20 SEPT

The counter-intelligence wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Police detained seven suspects for questioning on Saturday during raids conducted at multiple locations in the valley in a terror-related case.

The searches were conducted by the Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) at eight locations across Srinagar, Baramulla, Anantnag, Pulwama, Kupwara and Shopian.

The suspects were questioned and incriminating digital evidence that has bearing on the investigation was seized.

The case was lodged on a credible input received by the CIK that certain individuals in Jammu and Kashmir, under the cloak of social activism, were "misusing" platforms connected to mass media, social media, human rights, environment and women empowerment for activities detrimental to the sovereignty and security of the state.

Discreet information indicated their suspected links with secessionist organisations and proscribed terror outfits.

Some of these people were in contact with Pakistan-based terror handlers through encrypted messaging applications.

The seized digital evidence is expected to reveal deeper footprints of the conspiracy and further arrests cannot be ruled out.

Investigation is on to unearth the full scale of the conspiracy, identify other operatives and expose the suspected communication chains with handlers across the border,

This signals a zero-tolerance approach against those attempting to camouflage terror-linked activities as civil-society initiative.—*PTI*

The Counter Intelligence Kashmir personnel conducted the searches across six districts on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

ORGANISERS DISMISS CLAIM

Assam to probe if Zubeen swam without wearing life jacket

GUWAHATI, 20 SEPT

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said his government would conduct an inquiry into singer Zubeen Garg's death.

An FIR has been lodged against North East India Festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta and the singer's manager Siddhartha Sharma in Morigaon.

The government was trying to ascertain the veracity of reports of the singer being taken to a party the night before his death.

Garg died in Singapore on Friday, while "swimming in the sea without a life jacket". Singaporean authorities started their investigation.

"We will probe if he swam without wearing a life jacket and if he was taken from Assam with a wrong intent", the CM said.All arrangements will be made if anyone wants to give any information or be a witness.

Mahanta claimed that Garg had come to Singapore to relax and arg had made plans with members of the Assam Association to visit places before participating in the festival, he said. —*PTI*

Fans pay their last tribute at a photogarh of singer Zubeen Garg in Guwahati in Assam on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Undersea excavation to begin in TN's Poompuhar

CHENNAI, 20 SEPT

Following the discoveries at Keezhadi, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin announced on Saturday the initiation of undersea excavations in Poompuhar, aimed at uncovering the ancient civilisation that once thrived there.

The state Archaeology department commenced deep-sea exploration between the early Chola capital and the medieval trade hub of Nagapattinam on 19 September, in collaboration with the Indian Maritime University.

"Poompuhar could be as ancient as Keezhadi," Stalin stated on social media platform 'X', asserting that the excavation would highlight the submerged city's historical significance. Previous explorations have hinted at archaeological remains, including brick structures and pottery.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

- Deep-sea exploration between the early Chola capital of Poompuhar and the medieval trade hub of Nagapattinam commenced on 19 September.

Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu, remarked that "the history of Tamils will now be explored even beneath the sea," as efforts intensify to reveal the splendour of ancient Tamil civilisation. A team of experts and divers are conducting the exploration using advanced technology. —*PTI*

Bullet train project sees major breakthrough

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

A significant milestone was reached for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project with the successful breakthrough of a 4.88km-long tunnel between Shilphata and Ghansoli on Saturday morning, witnessed by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

He hailed the event as a "landmark achievement" and announced that the first phase of the high-speed corridor on the Surat-Bilimora section is slated to commence in December 2027.

Vaishnaw indicated that the bullet train will serve as a "transport for the middle class," with "reasonable" fares, reducing travel time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad from nine hours to just two hours and seven minutes. The bullet train service will see trains departing every half hour during peak hours. —*PTI*

CELESTIAL SPECTACLE

A rare celestial event lit up the skies over New Delhi and nearby cities Friday night as a bright meteor, likely a bolide, streaked overhead and fragmented mid-air. A bolide is a type of meteor that explodes upon entering Earth's atmosphere due to intense heat and friction. Visible across Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, and Aligarh, the fiery trail outshone city lights and quickly went viral on X. Experts say such vivid sightings are uncommon, even during active meteor periods

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Weddings, travel cancelled as panic grips H1B holders

A wave of panic and confusion swept through the Indian diaspora in the US on Saturday, just hours after President Donald Trump signed a proclamation imposing a staggering annual fee of USD 100,000 on new H1B visa applications. The sudden announcement, effective from 21 September 2025, has left thousands scrambling to change plans, with many cancelling imminent travel to India, including for weddings and Diwali holidays.

Indians on H-1B visas, along with their families and employers, were caught off guard by the proclamation titled 'Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers', which not only raised visa fees but also introduced immediate travel restrictions. Although the rule applies to new applicants outside the US, lack of clarity has triggered widespread fear among visa holders currently in the country or abroad.

Across major US airports on Friday night, people waiting to board flights to India were seen cancelling their trips in real time. One person even cancelled their wedding travel plans at the boarding gate. "This is practically a travel ban," said one H1B visa holder. "Even if you have a valid visa stamped in your passport, unless you have proof of the $1,00,000 payment, you may not be allowed to re-enter the US. No one knows what the exact process is."

Adding to the chaos, internal memos from major tech companies have urged employees not to travel outside the US, or to return immediately before the deadline.

"The number one thing employers are saying is: If you're inside the country, do not leave," said another professional. "Those already abroad are scrambling to return, today, if possible."

Confusion reigns among those holding valid H1B stamps and living in the US.

Across major US airports on Friday night, people waiting to board flights to India were seen cancelling their trips in real time ***PHOTO: PTI***

"What does it mean for me if I step out?" asked one. "The biggest question right now is: Can I even leave the country anymore?"

For many, the timing has been especially cruel. The proclamation comes just weeks before Diwali and the year-end holiday season, a peak travel period for Indian families.

"People usually book months in advance to be with family," said a long-time visa holder. "Now no one knows if they'll be able to go. It's just devastating."

One individual highlighted the psychological toll: "People have been under immense stress this year with so many changes. Now this, on top of everything else, is another layer of uncertainty. No one knows what's next."

Community leaders and legal experts note that the fear stems not only from the fee but from the rushed and ambiguous rollout. "Nobody's able to help," said a software engineer based in California.

"There are no specifics. No fine print. Just a sweeping order and total chaos."

Concerns also extend to dependents and spouses on H-4 visas. "Can my wife travel? What about my kids? Will they be stranded? No one has answers," one individual said. "Even if courts intervene or exceptions are made, that clarity may not come in time for people with immediate travel needs."

Another major concern is the future of Green Card prospects.

"Most of us have accepted we won't get a Green Card for decades," said a long-time resident. "But at least we had a stable path—live here, work, renew your visa. Now even that stability is gone."

With questions mounting about whether other visa categories, such as F1 (students) or L1 (intra-company transfers), could be targeted next, the sentiment among professionals is bleak. "There's a strong sense of dread," one tech worker said. "People are questioning whether they can build a future in the US anymore."

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick defended the policy, saying it forces companies to assess whether a worker is "valuable enough" to justify the annual fee. "If not, they should hire an American," he said. But lawmakers and industry bodies have strongly criticised the move. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi called it "reckless," warning it could cut off access to high-skilled talent crucial for American innovation.

Despite hopes that legal challenges may emerge or exemptions be introduced for national interest cases, the immediate reality is grim. "Even if exceptions are carved out, no one knows how they'll work. The fear is real and the timeline is immediate," said a person tracking the developments closely.

Trump's proclamation also introduced a new visa category called 'The Gold Card', offering expedited Green Card access for individuals investing USD 1 million personally or USD 2 million through a sponsoring company. But for most H-1B holders, that's no consolation.

As the 21 September deadline looms, uncertainty remains the only constant. "It's been just six or seven months into this administration, and everything already feels unrecognisable," said one professional.

"The US used to feel like home. Now it feels like we're being pushed out." *—PTI*

SALAR ساڈا

Nations ratify world's 1st treaty to protect int'l waters

A major agreement to protect marine diversity in the high seas was struck Friday when Morocco became the 60th nation to sign on, paving the way for the treaty to take effect next year.

The High Seas Treaty is the first legal framework aimed at protecting biodiversity in international waters, those that lie beyond the jurisdiction of any single country. International waters account for nearly two-thirds of the ocean and nearly half of Earth's surface and are vulnerable to threats including overfishing, climate change and deep-sea mining.

"The high seas are the world's largest crime scene, they're unmanaged, unenforced, and a regulatory legal structure is absolutely necessary," said Johan Bergenas, senior vice president of oceans at the World Wildlife Fund.

Still, the pact's strength is uncertain as some of the world's biggest players, the US, China, Russia and Japan, have yet to ratify. The US and China have signed, signaling intent to align with the treaty's objectives without creating legal obligations, while Japan and Russia have been active in preparatory talks.

Ratification triggers a 120-day countdown for the treaty to take effect. But much more work remains to flesh out how it will be implemented, financed and enforced.

"You need bigger boats, more fuel, more training and a different regulatory system," Bergenas said. "The treaty is foundational, now begins the hard work."

The high seas are home to an array of marine life and are crucial in regulating Earth's climate, they absorb heat and carbon dioxide and generate half the oxygen we breathe. The treaty is also essential to achieving what's known as the "30x30" target, an international pledge to protect 30 per cent of the planet's land and sea by 2030.

The treaty creates a legal process for countries to establish marine protected areas in those waters, including rules for potentially destructive activities like deep-sea mining and geoengineering schemes. It also establishes a framework for technology-sharing, funding mechanisms and scientific collaboration among countries.

Crucially, decisions under the treaty will be made multilaterally through what are known as conferences of parties, rather than by individual countries acting alone.

Within one year of the treaty taking effect, countries will meet to make decisions about implementation, financing and oversight, and only countries that ratify before then will have voting rights.

Some experts warn the treaty's impact could be blunted if the most powerful players on the high seas remain outside it.

"If major fishing nations like China, Russia and Japan don't join, they could undermine the protected areas," said Guillermo Crespo, a high seas expert with the International Union for Conservation of Nature commission. "It will be interesting to see how the implementation of the treaty will work without those who have historically made the most use of high seas resources."

The treaty does not create a punitive enforcement body of its own. Instead, it largely relies on individual countries to regulate their own ships and companies. If a ship flying a German flag violates the rules, for example, it's Germany's responsibility to act, said Torsten Thiele, founder of the Global Ocean Trust and an adviser on ocean governance and blue finance. That makes universal ratification essential, he said: "If somebody hasn't signed up, they'll argue they're not bound."

Enric Sala, founder of National Geographic Pristine Seas marine reserve project, warned that some nations may now point to the treaty as a reason to delay or avoid conservation efforts within their own waters.

"There are countries that are using the process to justify inaction at home," he said.

Lisa Speer, director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's international oceans program, said failing to protect the high seas could mean damage for any individual nation's waters.

"Marine life doesn't respect political boundaries. So fish migrate across the ocean," Speer said. "Same with turtles, with seabirds, and a whole host of other marine life. And so what happens in the high sea can really affect the health and resilience of the ocean within national jurisdiction, within our coastal waters."

Ocean exploration pioneer Sylvia Earle welcomed the ratification, but urged leaders not to see it as a finish line.

"This is a way station — not the end point," she said. "If we continue to take from the ocean at the scale we presently are, and use the ocean as a dump site as we presently are, yes we're putting the fish and the whales and the krill in Antarctica and the high seas at risk, but mostly, we are putting ourselves at risk." *—PTI*

The high seas are home to an array of marine life and are crucial in regulating Earth's climate, they absorb heat and carbon dioxide and generate half the oxygen we breathe ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

State-run centres become sanctuary of hope for women in distress

A poor middle-aged woman stepped into a state-run centre here recently with a heavy heart seeking a strange help.

The lady, belonging to a financially backward section, wanted to know whether the centre could find a shelter for her 18-year-old pregnant daughter who was unmarried.

Realising her plight, the centre shifted the daughter, an employee of a private firm, to an "one-stop centre" where women in distress are lodged after assuring her all further medical and psychological support.

They were among several women who have approached the empowerment centre seeking support for different needs ranging from a safe lodging facility, emergency help, livelihood means and legal assistance to psychological counselling, information and access to government schemes and skill training.

It is "Sankalp Centre" alias SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW).

A centrally sponsored initiative under the ambit of the Mission Shakti project, these centres function across the country as a crucial bridge for women to learn about resources and services related to their safety, security, and empowerment.

Started barely two years ago, it is steadily becoming a pillar of strength for women in the state and nationwide.

A Sankalp official said that project management units are operating in every district of the country that implement and oversee various initiatives of the 'Mission Shakti'.

According to figures, over 56,000 women have benefited through either service, support or information provided by the district Sankalp Centre in Thiruvananthapuram during 2024-25.

The hapless pregnant woman, who was safely shifted to the one-stop centre first and later rehabilitated at a shelter home, was one of the hundreds of beneficiaries of the umbrella scheme, the district Sankalp official said.

Of the total 56,212 beneficiaries, 367 cases were successfully addressed at the "one-stop centre", while 1,364 cases were handled at "women helpline 181 (Mithra). Of the 151 women rehabilitated, 59 were given necessary training and capacity building.

"We have conducted 554 sessions at various levels during the period, and over 11,000 students of 46 colleges in the district have been among the beneficiaries," Neethu S Sainu, District Mission Coordinator, Sankalp, HEW here, told PTI.

The Sankalp Centre frequently follows up on various cases reported through the helpline and helps a large number of women who had been in distress due to various circumstances ***PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS***

She said Sankalp is designed to ensure safety and security of women and empower them through various pro-women schemes by offering guidance on how to access its benefits.

Detailing its functioning, Sainu said Mission Shakti has eight components- One Stop Centres (OSC), Women Helpline (181), Shakti Sadans (shelter homes), Shakti Niwas (working women's hostel), Palna (creche component), Beti Bachavo Beti Padhao scheme, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana and Nari Adalats (alternative dispute resolution forum).

She said the duty of Sankalp is to coordinate, implement and follow up on the activities of all these components at respective districts to realise the larger objective of the empowerment of women.

The Sanklap centres intervene based on the information they receive through the helpline, volunteers, directly from fields, and through the people who directly visit their offices requesting assistance.

Sainu cited the example of three youngsters who directly came to the Sankalp's office here some time back, requesting help to find means for a decent livelihood.

- Over 56,000 women have benefited through either service, support or information provided by the district Sankalp Centre in Thiruvananthapuram.

"They were really poor and unable to meet any expenses for further education. Exploring the relevant government scheme, we admitted them to the Government Food Craft Institute in Thycaud here free of cost," she said.

After completing the course successfully, they are now working in three-star hotels with good pay, she said, adding that it is one of the success stories of Sankalp intervention.

The Sankalp Centre frequently and effectively followed up on various cases reported through the Helpline and helped a large number of women who had been in distress due to various circumstances.

A woman who had been subjected to brutal marital rape, a widow who struggled to cope with the sudden demise of her husband, a lady who had to go into prostitution due to poverty and another one who was finding it hard to look after her bedridden husband were among the women whose lives have been changed positively due to the follow-up actions by Sankalp.

A seven-member team, comprising experts including gender and financial literacy specialists, is the backbone of each district Sankalp centre, the official said, adding that in Kerala, it comes under the Department of Women and Child Development.

While the district collector is the nodal officer of Sankalp centres, the district officer of the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) is the convenor.

Sainu said they are planning more intensive awareness drives and a series of skill development interventions in the coming months with the support of Collector Anu Kumari and the convenor, Tasneem PS.

LED bulb making is one such initiative being planned for prisoners as part of their skill development, she said. The official, however, admitted that a dearth of adequate human resources and people's lack of awareness about its existence are among the challenges faced by the Sankalp.

Collector Anu Kumari recently launched the "Women in Workforce" campaign under the aegis of the district Sankalp centre here by clicking a selfie with the women staff of the Collectorate. *—PTI*

IS H1B TAKING AMERICAN JOBS?

Trump: H1B abuse is a national security threat

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

US President Donald Trump said abuse of the H1B programme is a national security threat as he signed a proclamation restricting entry of certain non-immigrant workers and imposing a staggering annual USD 100,000 fee on the visas used by companies to hire workers, including from India, to live and work in US.

"The H1B nonimmigrant visa programme was created to bring temporary workers into the United States to perform additive, high-skilled functions, but it has been deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers with lower-paid, lower-skilled labour," Trump said in the 'Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers' proclamation.

"The abuse of the H1B programme is also a national security threat. Domestic law enforcement agencies have identified and investigated H1B-reliant outsourcing companies for engaging in visa fraud, conspiracy to launder money... and other illicit activities to encourage foreign workers to come to the US," Trump added.

The Secretary of State shall also issue guidance to prevent misuse of B visas by alien beneficiaries of approved H1B petitions that have an employment start date beginning prior to 1 October, 2026.

It said the restrictions shall not apply to any individual or those working for a company or in an industry, if it is determined that the hiring of such individuals is in the national interest and does not pose a threat to national security.

Trump said there was a large-scale replacement of American workers through a systemic abuse of the programme that has undermined both American economic and national security.

"Some employers, using practices now widely adopted by entire sectors, have abused the H1B statute and its regulations to artificially suppress wages, resulting in a disadvantageous labour market for American citizens," Trump said. *—Agencies*

DON SAYS THE TECH BROS WILL BE 'VERY HAPPY'

Many tech companies hire workers on H1B visas. Trump recently met the tech CEOs at the White House.

Lawmakers say US will now lose millions

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

US lawmakers and community called US President Donald Trump's plan to impose a USD 100,000 fee on H1B visa applications "reckless" and "unfortunate". They said it will have a "huge negative" impact on the IT industry.

Trump's USD 100,000 H 1B visa fee is a "reckless attempt to cut America off from high-skilled workers who have long strengthened our workforce, fuelled innovation, and helped build industries that employ millions of Americans," Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

Krishnamoorthi said many H1B holders ultimately become citizens and launch businesses that create well-paying jobs in the US. "While other nations race to attract global talent, the US should strengthen its workforce and modernise our immigration system—not erect barriers," he said.

Former advisor to president Joe Biden and Asian-American community leader on immigration policy, Ajay Bhutoria, warned of a potential crisis for the US technology sector's competitive edge.

"The H1B programme, a lifeline for innovation that has attracted top talent from around the world, faces unprecedented barriers with this massive jump from the current USD 2000-USD 5000 total fee, which will crush small businesses and start-ups," Bhutoria said.

Bhutoria added that the move will drive away skilled professionals who power Silicon Valley. He said the move may backfire by pushing talent to competitors like Canada or Europe. *—PTI*

Boat sinks off Libya; 19 dead, 42 missing

CAIRO, 19 SEPT

At least 19 bodies were recovered after a migrant boat sank off eastern Libya, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The rubber vessel, carrying over 70 Sudanese and South Sudanese nationals, capsized on 9 September. Fourteen survivors were found five days later, while 42 remain missing. Libya has become a crucial transit route for migrants fleeing conflict and poverty in Africa and the Middle East. The Libya Red Crescent reported recovering bodies near Kambout beach, but it was unclear if they were among those previously identified. Earlier this month, another migrant boat capsized off Libya's coast, resulting in one death and 22 still unaccounted for. *—PTI*

US-led coalition kills IS militant in Syria

BAGHDAD, 19 SEPT

The US-led coalition confirmed the death of Omar Abdul-Qader, a senior Islamic State militant, in a raid in central Syria. Iraqi counterterrorism officials aided in locating Abdul-Qader, who was coordinating plans for attacks in Europe and the US. He was linked to the 2013 bombing of the Iranian Embassy in Beirut, which killed over 20 individuals. "We will not relent in pursuing terrorists who seek to attack the United States," stated CENTCOM commander Adm Brad Cooper. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that he had escaped custody after the fall of Assad's regime in December 2022. Although the Islamic State's territorial control was lost, sleeper cells remain active. *—PTI*

70 killed in drone attack on Sudan mosque

CAIRO, 19 SEPT

A drone strike attributed to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) targeted a mosque during prayers in El Fasher, North Darfur, killing at least 70 worshippers, report aid workers and the Sudanese army. The mosque was completely destroyed, and the death toll is expected to rise as more bodies are believed to be trapped in the rubble, according to a local aid worker. Local activists reported numerous attacks against unarmed civilians, including women and the elderly. UN Human Rights Office representative Li Fung warned, "The reality on the ground in El Fasher is horrific," with civilians facing fatal risks from both bombardment and RSF reprisals. The civil war has claimed over 40,000 lives. *—PTI*

Grammy winner Brett James dies in plane crash

LOS ANGELES, 20 SEPT

Brett James, a Grammy-winning country songwriter known for hits like "Jesus, Take the Wheel," perished in a plane crash in North Carolina at the age of 57. The small aircraft crashed in woods on Thursday afternoon, with no survivors among the three aboard, including James. "Under unknown circumstances," the Federal Aviation Administration is investigating the incident. James, who was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2020, had over 500 songs recorded, selling more than 110 million copies. Country singer Jason Aldean expressed his sorrow, stating, "Heartbroken to hear of the loss of my friend Brett James tonight." *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

The aftermath of Russia's drone attack on Ukraine, on Saturday
PHOTO: X @ZELENSKYYUA

Massive Russian drone assault on Ukraine kills three

KYIV, 20 SEPT

Russia launched at least 600 missile and drones across Ukraine in a massive attack early on Saturday, killing at least three people and wounding dozens more, Ukrainian officials said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said attacks took place across nine regions, including Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv, Zaporizhzhia, Poltava, Kyiv, Odesa, Sumy and Kharkiv.

"The enemy's target was our infrastructure, residential areas and civilian enterprises," he said. "Each such strike is not a military necessity but a deliberate strategy by Russia to intimidate civilians and destroy our infrastructure".

At least 26 people were injured in the attack in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region. Several high-rise buildings and homes were damaged in the eastern city of Dnipro.

Russia launched 619 drones and missiles, Ukraine's Air Force said in a statement. In total, 579 drones, eight ballistic missiles and 32 cruise missiles were detected. Ukrainian forces shot down and neutralised 552 drones, two ballistic missiles and 29 cruise missiles. Poland scrambled its jets during the attack, fearing another Russian incursion of its airspace.

Meanwhile, Ukraine hit Moscow's Saratov oil refinery deep inside Russian territory, for the second time in a week, triggering massive fires.

Zelenskyy is also expected to meet US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the UN assembly next week. *—Salar News with agencies*

Estonia calls on NATO after Russian jet row

Estonia has requested an urgent consultation with NATO members after Russian warplanes violated its airspace on Friday, days after drone incursions were reported by Poland and Romania. Estonia invoked Article 4 of the NATO treaty to formally begin urgent consultations.

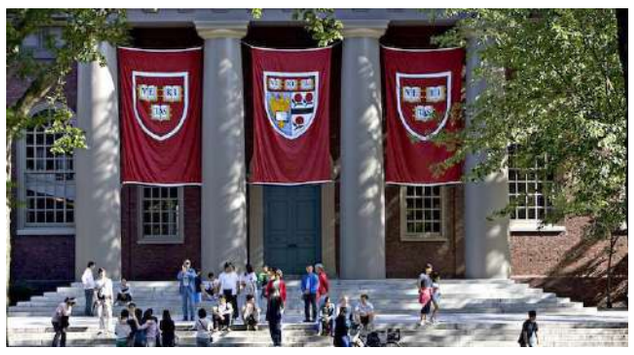
Govt threatens Harvard with more sanctions for data sharing

WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

The Trump administration escalated its fight with Harvard University on Friday, placing the Ivy League school under extra financial oversight and threatening sanctions if it does not provide additional data on its admissions practices.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon said the department was placing Harvard under "heightened cash monitoring," forcing the school to use its own money to pay out financial aid for students and then seek reimbursement from the government.

She also threatened "further enforcement action" if Harvard does not turn over records to prove it no longer considers race in admissions.



Harvard's finances fave scrutiny after Trump took office *PHOTO: X*

McMahon said she had concerns over the school's financial well-being because its federal funding is under threat. Harvard has a $53 billion endowment, the largest of any university.

This comes after Trump the Trump administration cut off $2.6 billion in federal research funding to the school, which was later overturned by a federal judge.

On Friday, the Department of Health and Human Services unfroze $46 million in research funding for Harvard. *—PTI*

House passes resolution honouring Kirk

The House overwhelmingly passed a resolution honouring conservative activist Charlie Kirk on Friday, but a significant number of Democrats voted against it, highlighting the deepening political divide in the wake of his assassination. "Today's resolution underscores the majority's recklessness," said Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, a Democrat who voted against the resolution. "We should be clear about who Charlie Kirk was." Speaker Mike Johnson said there was "no partisan language" in the resolution and there was "no excuse" for anyone not to vote in favour of it.

DON KILLS 3 MORE ON 3RD VENEZUELAN BOAT

WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

Trump said the US military has carried out its third fatal strike against an alleged drug smuggling vessel this month, killing at least three people.

Trump on Friday on Truth Social said the strike carried out against a vessel "affiliated with a Designated Terrorist Organisation conducting narcotrafficking in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility."

The US twice this month carried out strikes against alleged drug-smuggling vessels that had originated from Venezuela.

Venezuela said the US is waging an "undeclared war" as it conducted a three-day military drills.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration on Friday asked the Supreme Court for an emergency order allowing it to strip legal protections from more than 300,000 Venezuelan migrants. *—Salar News with Agencies*

400 arrested in Chicago in 2 weeks: ICE

Immigration enforcement officials have arrested more than 400 people as part of an operation in the Chicago area that launched a two weeks ago, a top Immigration and Customs Enforcement official said.

Trump to host Erdogan on 25 Sept

Trump said that he will host Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the White House on 25 Sept, to discuss trade and military deals, a "large-scale purchase of Boeing aircraft(s)" and a "major F-16 deal"

Mike Waltz confirmed as UN ambassador

The Senate on Friday confirmed Mike Waltz to be the next US ambassador to the UN, filling the last vacancy in Trump's Cabinet after eight months of delays and the withdrawal of a previous nominee.

US ends Syrian's Temporary Protected Status

The US ended the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Syria, warning that they face arrest and deportation if they don't leave in 60 days. This ends TPS protections for more than 6,000 Syrians.

Israel kills 51 in Gaza; Portugal to recognise Palestine state

Displaced Palestinians flee Gaza City and head toward the southern Gaza Strip after Israel's ground invansion *PHOTO: PTI*

CAIRO/BEIRUT, 20 AUG

Israeli strikes killed at least 51 people overnight in Gaza City, said health officials, as Israel ramps up its offensive there and urges Palestinians to leave.

Palestinians have streamed out of the city — some by car, others on foot. Israel opened another corridor south of Gaza City for two days this week to allow more people to evacuate.

But many Palestinians in the famine-stricken city are unwilling to be uprooted again, too weak to leave or unable to afford the cost of moving.

The strikes come as Portugal said it is moving to recognise Palestinian statehood at the United Nations General Assembly next week.

Portugal is among other Western nations, including the UK, Canada, Australia, Malta, Belgium and Luxembourg expected to recognise Palestinian statehood.

HEZBOLLAH CALLS ON SAUDI

Hezbollah's Secretary-General Naim Qassem has appealed to Saudi Arabia to restore relations with the Lebanese armed group and build a joint front against Israel. *—Salar News with Agencies*

'MUSE' SOFTWARE COMPROMISED

Cyberattack disrupts European airports

BRUSSELS, 20 SEPT

A cyberattack targeting check-in and boarding systems has snarled air traffic and caused delays at some of Europe's top airports, officials said on Saturday.

The Brussels airport says the attack means that only manual check-in and boarding were possible there, and the incident was having a "large impact" on flight schedules.

"There was a cyberattack on Friday night, 19 September, against the service provider for the check-in and boarding systems affecting several European airports, including Brussels Airport," it said in a statement.

Authorities at Berlin's Brandenburg Airport said a service provider for passenger handling systems was attacked on Friday evening, prompting airport operators to cut off connections to the systems.

London Heathrow Airport, Europe's busiest, said "a technical issue" affected a service provider for check-in and boarding systems.

"Collins Aerospace, which provides check-in and boarding systems for several airlines across multiple airports globally, is experiencing a technical issue that may cause delays for departing passengers," Heathrow said in a statement.

Heathrow was among several European airports to be hit by the cyberattack which affected electronic check-in and baggage systems *PHOTO: X*

Collins Aerospace owner RTX said on Saturday that it had become aware of disruption to its MUSE software in selected airports.

The airports advised travellers to check their flight status and apologised for any inconvenience.

Formed in 2018, Collins is a US aviation and defence technology company and a subsidiary of RTX Corp., which was formerly Raytheon Technologies.

The company's system doesn't offer direct check-in for passengers, but provides the technology that allows passengers to check themselves in, print boarding passes and bag tags, and dispatch their own luggage, all from a kiosk.

The impact was felt only at some airports: the Roissy, Orly and Le Bourget airports in the Paris area reported no disruptions. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India puts import curbs on chemicals till Sept 2026

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

India has announced new import restrictions on a chemical crucial to the pharmaceutical industry, as per a notification from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT). The substance, known as "ATS-8 (4r-cis)-1 1-dimethyleth-yl-6-cyanomethyl-2 2-dimethyl-1 3-diox-ane-4-acetate," will have its imports restricted until 30 September 2026, specifical-ly if the cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) value is below USD 111 per kilogram. The DGFT added that "inputs imported by advanced authorisation holders, export-oriented units, and social economic zones shall be exempted from the mini-mum import price (MIP) condition." This chemical is predominantly sourced from countries such as China. *—PTI*

True Colours' Rs 128 cr IPO to open on 25 Sept

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

True Colors, an importer and distributor of digital textile printers, on Saturday said it has fixed a price band of Rs 181-191 per share for the Rs 127.96-crore pub-lic issue which will open for public subscription on 23 September. The initial pub-lic offering (IPO) will con-clude on 25 September . The bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on September 22, the com-pany said in a statement. The IPO is mix of fresh issue of nearly 57 lakh equity shares and an offer for sale of 10 lakh shares by pro-moters. The price band has been fixed at Rs 181-191 per equity share. At the upper end of the price band, the company is going to fetch Rs 127.96 crore. *—PTI*

Rs 30,000 cr funds secured for ship building sector: TN

CHENNAI, 20 SEPT

Tamil Nadu has attracted investments worth Rs 30,000 crore to set up two shipyards in Tuticorin dis-trict, a move expected to see creation of around 55,000 jobs, Minister for Industries TRB Rajaa said on Saturday. The Minister recalled Chief Minister MK Stalin's comments at the TN Rising-Tuticorin conclave in August, where he pledged to esablsih a com-pany to promote shipbuild-ing sector in the state. Following the announce-ment, State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) and VO Chidambaranar Port Authority signed a Memorandum of Understanding in September, Rajaa said in a social media post on Saturday. *—PTI*

GRSE, Germany's Carsten Rehder ink $62.4M deal

KOLKATA, 20 SEPT

Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) Ltd on Saturday said it has signed a contract worth $62.44 million with a Hamburg-based company for the con-struction of four hybrid multi-purpose vessels. The contract also includes a provision for an additional two hybrid propulsion ves-sels, statement said. The deal was signed by ex-Com-mander Shantanu Bose, Director, GRSE, and Thomas Rehder, Managing Director, Carsten Rehder Schiffsmakler und Reederei, in the presence of senior officials. The 120-metre-long and 17-metre-wide ves-sels will feature battery-as-sisted hybrid propulsion, improved fuel efficiency, and flexible cargo handling systems, aligning with International Maritime Organization (IMO) decar-bonisation targets. Designed to carry 7,500 tonnes of cargo in a single hold, ships can accommo-date bulk, general, and proj-ect cargoes. *—PTI*

Return to US now: Firms to H1B visa workers

US says new fee could raise over $100 billion and stop outsourcing in IT firms

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 20 SEPT

H1B visa holders and their families are being urgently advised to return to the United States before a new immigration proclamation comes into effect at 12.01am on 21 September, 2025, which mandates a $100,000 fee for entry unless the visa petition is accompanied by the pay-ment.

Signed by President Donald Trump on Friday, the procla-mation targets non-immi-grants in "specialty occupa-tions", mainly impacting Indian professionals in the tech sector. Immigration attorneys and companies have sounded the alarm, warning that those currently outside the US could be stranded or denied re-entry if they fail to return before the deadline.

Immigration attorney Cyrus Mehta noted that "H1B visa holders still in India may have already missed the dead-line, as there is no way a direct flight from India will get in time." However, he sug-gested that some may still make it to the US, particular-ly on flights arriving in California before the cut-off.

Companies like Microsoft have reportedly issued inter-nal emails urging employees on H1B visas and their depen-dents to remain in the US for the "foreseeable future", cit-ing the risk of being denied re-entry. While the procla-mation doesn't directly men-tion H4 dependents, they are also being cautioned to avoid international travel.

The rule applies only to individuals entering the US on or after 21 September *PHOTO: X*

- The White House claims the move is nec-essary to prevent abuse of the H1B programme, which it says has dis-proportionately favoured IT outsourcing firms.

The White House claims the move is necessary to prevent abuse of the H1B programme, which it says has disproportionately favoured IT out-sourcing firms. The share of IT workers in the H1B pro-gramme has grown from 32 per cent in 2003 to over 65 per cent in recent years.

Critics, however, have con-demned the move as discrimi-natory. David Bier, Director of Immigration Studies at the Cato Institute, said Indian H1B workers have contribut-ed "hundreds of billions in taxes" and are being "official-ly villainised" under this pol-icy.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick defended the policy, stating it will "stop the US from bringing in the bot-tom quartile" and instead pri-oritise "extraordinary peo-ple" who will create jobs. He added that the new fee could raise over $100 billion for the US Treasury.

The rule applies only to individuals entering the US on or after 21 September. Those already in the country remain unaffected, though the annual fee may influence employer decisions on retain-ing foreign workers.

The move comes amid an already years-long Green Card backlog, particularly affecting Indian nationals, many of whom now face increased uncertainty about their future in the US. *—PTI*

IT FIRMS AT A DISADVANTAGE

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), with over 5,000 H1B approvals in 2025, is the second-largest recipi-ent of these visas. The fee hike is expected to hit India's top IT firms, which rely heavily on the H1B. Here's a look at the top firms and their 2025 H1B approvals:

amazon 10,044	TCS 5,505
Microsoft 5,189	Meta 5,123
4,202	Google 4,181
cognizant 5,189	JPMorganChase 2,440
Deloitte. Consulting 2,353	ORACLE 2,092
Infosys 2,004	wipro 1,523
Tech Mahindra 951	

H1B Programme

- In fiscal year 2025, the share of IT workers grew to an average of 65 per cent from an average of 32 per cent compared to data from fiscal year 2003.
- It is 36% cheaper for American firms to hire H1B employees than US workers.
- US alleges abuse of H1B as firms are firing US workers due to high cost & hiring H1B workers at the same time.
- **For eg:** An IT firm got 5,000 H1B workers in 2025 but fired more than 15,000 US employees

Source: ***US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)***

Nasscom flays one day deadline for H1B fee hike

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

With just a day left before the steep H-1B visa fee hike takes effect, Nasscom has urged its member companies to imme-diately bring back employees currently outside the US. The new application fee is set to rise to USD 1,00,000 starting 21 September.

Shivendra Singh, Vice President of Nasscom, told PTI that the sudden move by the US creates disruption for businesses and professionals. "We've advised member com-panies to ensure that employ-ees on H-1B visas return to the US before the deadline," he said.

Singh criticised the lack of transition time, calling the one-day notice highly disrup-tive.

"This comes at a time when technologies like AI are advancing rapidly, and such policy shifts could impact America's innovation leader-ship. More industry consulta-tion should have taken place," he added.

Indian nationals account for over 70 per cent of H1B visa holders, benefiting both Indian and US companies. Singh emphasised that these professionals are in demand globally due to their special-ised skills.

Nasscom expressed concern over the short notice, saying it creates uncertainty not only for businesses but also for students and skilled work-ers worldwide.

The organisation warned the move could have ripple effects on the US innovation ecosystem and broader job economy.

India's $283-billion IT sector is already facing challenges, including client delays, macroeconomic instability, trade tensions, and the AI-driven shift in outsourcing models.

"Companies will work with clients to manage transi-tions," Nasscom said. *—PTI*

'H1B FEE HIKE WILL CHOKE US INNOVATION'

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant has criticised US President Donald Trump's move to raise the annual H1B visa fee to USD 100,000, saying it could choke innovation in the US while boosting it in India. The administration says the fee ensures only "highly skilled" professionals enter the US, protecting American jobs and prevent-ing the replacement of local workers. Kant warned that by limiting access to global tal-ent, the US may push the next wave of labs, patents, start-ups, and innovation to Indian cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and Gurgaon. He said India's top doctors, engineers, and scien-tists now have an opportunity to contribute to the nation's growth and #ViksitBharat. The fee hike is part of wider US immigration restrictions affecting H1B holders. *—PTI*

GST 2.0: Top appliance makers reduce prices

KOLKATA, 20 SEPT

Leading appliance makers have reduced prices of room air conditioners by up to Rs 4,500 and on dishwashers by up to Rs 8,000, with new rates set to be rolled out from Monday as companies extend GST benefits to consumers.

The companies, in turn, are expecting a double-digit increase in sales during the festival season, with Navratra starting this week.

Leading players, such as Voltas, Daikin, Godrej Appliances, Panasonic, and Haier, have already come out with a new revised price list, which will be applicable from Monday, September 22, when the revised GST rates take effect.

Additionlly, Corrugated box manufacturers have raised an alarm regarding a significant disparity created by recent GST rate rationalisations, endangering the survival of over 20,000 MSMEs in the sec-tor.

While the GST on corrugated paperboard boxes has lowered from 12 per cent to 5 per cent, the tax on primary raw mate-rials, kraft paper and board, has increased from 12 per cent to 18 per cent.

The sector, which employs over a million people and con-verts nearly seven million tonnes of kraft paper annual-ly, warned of escalating costs leading to a 5-7 per cent rise in box prices for consumers.

Conversely, the recent GST rationalisation is expected to benefit ITC's food division, making nutritional products more affordable. Executive Director Hemant Malik noted that the company will imple-ment price cuts across its product range. *—PTI*

Pharma market grows by 8% in August: Report

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

The Indian Pharmaceutical Market (IPM) grew 8.1per cent year-on-year in August 2025, following a 7.1per cent rise in July, closely matching the overall 8per cent growth recorded in FY25, according to IQVIA data cited by HDFC Securities. Despite this, unit sales fell 0.8per cent during the month.

Chronic therapies continued to drive growth, particularly cardiac, anti-diabetic, and central nervous system (CNS) drugs, while acute segments such as anti-infective and gas-trointestinal medicines expanded more slowly. Chronic therapies increased 12per cent in August, with car-diac and anti-diabetic medi-cines both up 11per cent, aided by strong demand for GLP-1 molecules.

CNS therapies grew 8per cent. Among acute therapies, anti-infective rose 6per cent, gastrointestinal drugs 2per cent, and vitamins, minerals, and nutrients (VMN) 7per cent.

Other segments saw robust gains, with respiratory medi-cines up 19per cent, oncology 23per cent, and pain manage-ment products 6per cent.

Looking ahead, HDFC Securities expects IPM growth for FY26 to remain in the 8–9per cent range, driven by faster expansion in chronic therapies, recovery in acute segments, and new product launches.

India's pharmaceutical industry ranks third globally by volume and 14th by value, supplying over half of global vaccines and nearly 40per cent of US generics. Government schemes such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) and Strengthening of Pharmaceuticals Industry (SPI) are boosting invest-ments, modernising labs, sup-porting R&D, and enabling Indian companies to compete internationally. *—ANI*

Stalin launches Equinix's ₹574 cr data centre

CHENNAI, 20 SEPT

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **MK Stalin** has inaugurated an Artificial Intelligence (AI) ready data centre, built by Equinix India at a cost of Rs 574 crore, located within the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) complex in Siruseri. The launch has been hailed as a signifi-cant step in establishing Tamil Nadu as India's digital hub, as highlighted by the state government-backed investment promotion agency, Guidance.

In a social media post, Guidance stated, "Tamil Nadu: Where Digital Growth Meets Social Responsibility. Hon'ble Chief Minister M K Stalin inaugurated Equinix's Rs 574 crore data centre at SIPCOT, Siruseri, powering Tamil Nadu's rise as India's digital hub."

Equinix India's Managing Director, Manoj Paul, further demonstrated the company's commitment to the region by donating Rs 9 crore from its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.

The centre boasts a reliabili-ty of 99.99 per cent uptime and includes a comprehensive suite of interconnection ser-vices, facilitating seamless hybrid multi-cloud connectiv-ity for enterprises. *—PTI*

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal with UAE Minister of Foreign Trade Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi co-chairs the UAE-India Business Council (UIBC) Roundtable discussion, in Abu Dhabi, UAE *PHOTO: PTI*

UAE firms keen to invest in Indian sectors, says Goyal

DUBAI, 20 SEPT

UAE companies are exploring a range of sectors in India including infrastructure, data centers, banking, startups, logistics, renewable energy, shipbuilding, retail, and phar-maceuticals to expand their investments, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday.

He added that both countries have reset their investment targets and are actively work-ing to accelerate collabora-tions across key sectors.

Speaking to reporters, Goyal highlighted strong UAE inter-est in India's infrastructure, banking sector, startups, logistics ecosystem, and green energy. "The UAE is keen to invest in high-tech areas, so we could see serious collabo-rations in technology sectors as well," he said.

Bankers are increasingly attracted to expanding opera-tions in India, with one plan-ning a new presence in GIFT City.

Goyal was in the UAE for the 13th India-UAE High-Level Joint Task Force on Investments, leading a 75-member business delega-tion. During the UAE-India Business Council Roundtable, he engaged with CEOs of major Indian and UAE compa-nies, including First Abu Dhabi Bank, IFFCO Group, and Sharaf Group. Key proj-ects such as Bharat Mart, expected to be ready by 2027, and the India-UAE Friendship Hospital were dis-cussed.

Around 9,000 companies have expressed interest in Bharat Mart.

India has received USD 24B in FDI from the UAE between April 2000 and June 2025. Talks also covered improving the investment climate, including market access, regu-latory processes, dispute reso-lution, arbitration frame-works, and the adoption of virtual document transfer sys-tems. *—PTI*

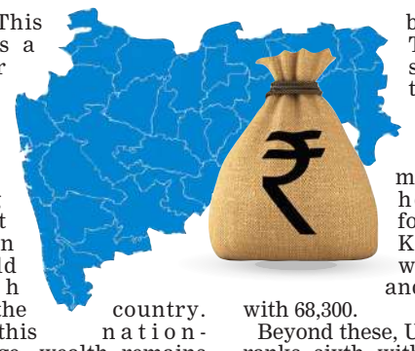
1.42 LAKH FROM MUMBAI

M'rashtra leads India's wealth map with 1.78L millionaires: Report

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Maharashtra has firmly estab-lished itself as the nation's leading hub of wealth cre-ation, ranking first with 1,78,600 millionaire house-holds, a 194 per cent growth since 2021. According to the Mercedes-Benz Hurun India Wealth Report 2025, Maharashtra's rise is strongly supported by a 55 per cent surge in its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) since 2020-21, with Mumbai alone accounting for 1,42,000 of these households, making it the "Millionaire Capital" of India.

India as a whole now has 8,71,700 millionaire house-holds, defined as those with a net worth of INR 8.5 crore or more. This represents a 90 per cent jump com-pared to 2021, sig-nalling robust growth in household wealth across the country. Despite this nation-wide surge, wealth remains concentrated in a few regions, with the top 10 states collec-tively accounting for more than 79 per cent of the total millionaire households.



Delhi stands second on the list with 79,800 millionaire households residing within its boundaries. Tamil Nadu secures the third posi-tion at the state level, with 72,600 millionaire households, followed by Karnataka with 68,800 and Gujarat with 68,300.

Beyond these, Uttar Pradesh ranks sixth with 57,700 mil-lionaire households, while Telangana is close behind with 51,700. West Bengal con-tributes 50,400 households, Rajasthan has 33,100, and Haryana completes the top 10 with 30,500 millionaire house-holds. *—ANI*

Study links quantum tech with atomic cores

SYDNEY, 20 SEPT

In a landmark study published in 'Science', researchers have successfully demonstrated quantum entanglement between two atomic nuclei separated by approximately 20 nanometres.

This achievement marks a significant step forward in quantum computing, which harnesses entanglement as a fundamental feature.

Lead researcher stated, "Entanglement is a kind of connection between particles that will allow quantum com-puters to outperform classical systems." Crucially, the meth-od employed, called the "geo-metric gate," enables long-dis-tance communication between atomic nuclei via electrons.

The team aims to further extend entanglement distanc-es, positioning this work as a cornerstone for future advancements in quantum technology. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Aditi Ashok in Top 20 after first round

ROGERS, 20 SEPT

India's Aditi Ashok carded a bogey-free first round of five-under 66 to lie tied 18th at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship here. Sarah Schmelzel and Minami Katsu shared the lead at the end of the first round after shooting rounds of eight-under 63 at the Pinnacle Country Club. Teeing off on the front nine, Aditi started with two birdies and also made birdies on the 13th, 15th, and 18th holes to take her birdie tally of the day to five. She was bogey-free for the day. Indo-Canadian Savannah Grewal carded three-under 68 in her first round and finished T-45, while Gurleen Kaur shot one-under 70 after making four birdies and three bogeys to be T-86th. The event has been low scoring, and the projected cut stands at three under par. —*PTI*

Korea Open 2025: Iga Swiatek reaches final

DUBAI, 20 SEPT

Iga Swiatek stormed into the final of the rain-hit Korea Open on Saturday, defeating Barbora Krejcikova in the quarterfinals and Maya Joint in the semifinals to book a title clash with either Katerina Siniakova or Ekaterina Alexandrova. Swiatek began the day by hammering twice Grand Slam singles champion Barbora Krejcikova 6-0, 6-2. Australian teenager Joint, who earlier downed Clara Tauson 6-0, 6-3, found herself in all kinds of trouble against an ultra-focussed Swiatek and tamely surrendered the first set on Centre Court in only 25 minutes.The top seed briefly wobbled in the second set to hand Joint the opportunity to break, but she quickly reset to go 3-1 up and never looked back from there. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Jyoti Singh to lead junior hockey team in Australia

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Defender Jyoti Singh will lead a 23-member Indian junior women's hockey team on a five-match tour of Australia, scheduled at the National Hockey Centre in Canberra from 26 September to 2 October. The side will play three matches against the Australian junior women's team, followed by two fixtures against Canberra Chill, a club competing in Australia's Hockey One League. The tour will serve as crucial preparation for the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2025, slated to be held in Santiago, Chile, in December.—*PTI*

Thomas and Yellamaraju missed cut in Korn Ferry

OHIO, 20 SEPT

Rayhan Thomas and Sudarshan Yellamaraju started the week with under-par rounds but failed to make the cut at the Nationwide Children's Championship on the Korn Ferry Tour. In their second round at the Ohio State University Golf Club - Scarlet Course, Thomas carded two-over 73 for a one-over total for two rounds, while Yellamaraju carded a horrendous seven-over 78 for a total of six-over. The cut this week was set at even par. The finish will likely result in Thomas dropping down to about the 111th spot on the Tour rankings, while Yellamaraju continues to hold onto the 14th position.—*PTI*

Satwik-Chirag pair beats Chia-Soh to enter CM 2025 final

Star Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty PHOTO: PTI

SHENZHEN, 20 SEPT

Star Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty stormed into their second successive men's doubles final with a clinical straight-game win over former world champions Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia at the China Masters Super 750 badminton tournament here on Saturday.

Fresh from a World Championships bronze and a runner-up finish at the Hong Kong Open last week, the Asian Games champions outclassed their long-time nemesis, Aaron and Son, 21-17, 21-14 in a dominating performance. Satwik and Chirag came into the match with a 4-11 head-to-head record against the Malaysian duo, who are two-time Olympic medallists.

However, the Indians had recently got the better of Aaron and Soh en route to their bronze medal at the World Championships in Paris. On Saturday, the Indians came out with an all-out attacking approach, backed by a solid defence, while also dominating the front court as the Malaysians particularly Aaron looked out of sorts during the 41-minute semifinal clash.

The opening game was a tight affair with both pairs fighting tooth and nail. Aaron and Soh grabbed a 10-7 lead with four straight points. But three errors from Aaron including a service fault allowed Satwik and Chirag to claw back. The Malaysians still held a slender one-point advantage at the interval.

At 14-13, Aaron faltered again at the net, handing the initiative back to the Indians. A flurry of smashes from Satwik and errors from their rivals took the Indians to 18-14. A sharp return from Satwik gave them four game points, and they sealed the opener on the second opportunity.In the second game, Satwik and Chirag raced to a 5-2 lead after the change of ends, with Satwik's smashes and Chirag's deft front-court play helping them stretch it to 8-2. —*PTI*

India aims for another dominant show against Pak

ICC stands firm, appoints Pycroft again for India-Pak match

DUBAI, 20 SEPT

Skipper Suryakumar Yadav will depend heavily on his spin troika as India gear up for yet another demolition act of Pakistan in what promises to be an intense and tense Super 4 face-off of the Asia Cup here on Sunday.

There have been numerous tense build-ups to Indo-Pak men's cricket matches in the past, but 'surface tension' wasn't as visible as it has been in this case after last Sunday, when Suryakumar and his team's decision not to shake hands with the rivals triggered a storm.

On Sunday, though, one will get to see Jasprit Bumrah, whose mere presence lifts the spirit of his teammates in the playing eleven alongside Varun Chakravarthy. Both rested in the inconsequential last game. In case Axar is reported unfit by this evening, there is enough time to fly in a Washington Sundar or a Riyan Parag to fill in that slot, although it won't exactly be a like-for-like replacement.

Opener Saim Ayub, the left-hander who scored back-to-back ducks, has become a subject of ridicule for making more impact with the ball.

Currently, there seem to be only two players who can keep them in the fight: Fakhar Zaman, the best batter in the squad, and Shaheen, who would like to bowl a better first spell against Abhishek Sharma. While Sanju Samson scored a scratchy fifty against Oman, it is unlikely that he would bat No. 3 against Pakistan if right-hander Shubman Gill gets out quickly.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has once again

India's Tilak Varma, right, and batting partner Suryakumar Yadav run between the wickets to score during the Asia Cup cricket match between India and Pakistan PHOTO: PTI

DP WORLD ASIA CUP 2025

Andy Pycroft PHOTO: PTI

appointed Elite Panel Match Referee Andy Pycroft for the high-voltage India-Pakistan Asia Cup Super 4s match on Sunday, despite the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) repeated requests to strike him off the roster. "Andy Pycroft is the match referee for the Indo-Pak game," a tournament source told PTI. The list of match officials for Sunday's game has not yet been made public. The other match referee in the tournament is former West Indies captain Richie Richardson. Pycroft was the match referee last Sunday when the Indian team, as a policy decision, allegedly did not shake hands with the Pakistan team.

The Zimbabwean official subsequently found himself at the centre of the controversy after India skipper Suryakumar Yadav allegedly did not follow the convention at the toss. The Pakistan team had written two emails to the ICC, first requesting Pycroft's removal from the tournament and then asking the global body to remove him from their matches.

HEAD TO HEAD ASIA CUP

PLAYED:	14
INDIA WON:	11
PAKISTAN WON:	3

INDIA vs PAKISTAN MATCH STARTS AT 8.00 PM IST

Pakistan canceled media interaction

Meanwhile, Pakistan team management has decided not to interact with media ahead of the Super4 contest."Pakistan has once again cancelled the pre-match presser conference to avoid questions on Pycroft's appointment and no handshake controversy," a tournament source said. —*PTI*

SMRITI'S FASTEST CENTURY

Smriti Mandhana PHOTO: PTI

India women lose ODI series 1-2 to Australia

NEW DELHI, 20 SEPT

Graceful opener Smriti Mandhana scored the second fastest women's ODI hundred off just 50 balls in the third one-day international against Australia here on Saturday.

Mandhana went past former Australian batter Karen Rolton's record (off 57 balls) made in 2000-01 against South Africa. Former Australian skipper Meg Lanning leads the list of fastest century makers with a 45-ball century, which she made against New Zealand in the 2012-13 season.

The 29-year-old Mandhana's 50-ball effort, which included 14 fours and four sixes, was also the fastest by an Indian batter, as the left-hander rewrote her own earlier record of a hundred in 70 balls. Beth Mooney was the star of the day as she smashed 138 off just 75 balls (23x4, 1x6) for her fourth WODI ton to guide her side to a massive total. She shared a 106-run stand for the third wicket with Ellyse Perry (68 off 70 balls). Opener Georgia Voll gave Australia the start they needed with a 81 off 61 balls. Smriti Mandhana's second-fastest hundred in women's ODIs went in vain as India's quest for a

Beth Mooney PHOTO: PTI

world-record chase in the series-deciding third game against Australia ended in a 43-run defeat, here on Saturday.

Brief Score:

Australia 412 all out in 47.5 overs (Alyssa Healy 30, Georgia Voll 81, Ellyse Perry 68, Beth Mooney 138, Ashleigh Gardner 39; Deepti Sharma 2/75, Arundhati Reddy 3/86).

India: 369 all out in 47 overs (Mandhana 125, Harmanpreet Kaur 52, Deepti Sharma 72, Sneh Rana 35; Kim Garth 3/69, Megan Schutt 2/53). —*PTI*

AIFF can copy IPL model to run ISL: Bhutia

MUMBAI, 20 SEPT

The legendary Bhaichung Bhutia on Saturday said that the Indian Premier League can be the "biggest example" for the AIFF to organise the country's top-tier league on its own, after the Supreme Court approved the football governing body's draft constitution.

As per the apex court order, India's top-tier football league can no longer be owned or managed by private players, and the All India Football Federation will have to take the sole ownership of the product. Bhutia said that while it will be a challenge for the AIFF, a collective effort will be required for the league to be organised.

"I think it's a challenge because (when) we started the ISL with FSDL, somebody had to come in and do it because I don't think at that time the All India Football Federation was ready for it. —*PTI*

Gravenberch stars as Liverpool beat Everton 2-1

LONDON, 20 SEPT

Liverpool maintained a perfect start to its Premier League season when Ryan Gravenberch scored and set up a first-half goal in a 2-1 win over Everton on Saturday in the Merseyside derby.

Seeking to win consecutive league titles for the first time since the 1980s, Liverpool is unbeaten in five matches.

Liverpool was listless and sloppy for large stretches of the second half, and Idrissa Gueye scored in the 58th minute for the Toffees, who lost for the first time since their opener at Leeds.

Liverpool has won five consecutive home games against the Blues for the first time since 1933-37. Everton has not won a match at Anfield attended by fans since 1999, its only victory since then behind closed doors in 2021 during the coronavirus pandemic. —*PTI*

Verstappen on pole as Piastri crashes in chaotic F1 qualifier

BAKU, 20 SEPT

Max Verstappen took pole position and championship leader Oscar Piastri crashed out in qualifying for Formula 1's Azerbaijan Grand Prix in a marathon session with constant crashes, rain, and a record six red flags.

Red Bull's Verstappen was fastest by .478 from Carlos Sainz, Jr. of Williams in a session that ran an hour past its scheduled time, longer than most races. Liam Lawson of Racing Bulls starts Sunday's race a career-best third.

"You just have to send it," Verstappen said of his final lap, trying to beat a time Sainz had set in much drier conditions.

Piastri slammed into the barrier while chasing pole position on a track left slippery by earlier rainfall. His McLaren teammate, Lando Norris, was only seventh after clipping the wall on his final lap and couldn't take full advantage of Piastri's error. —*PTI*

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